



Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage



LIVING EATING HABITS, REVITALIZED FOODWAYS
AND THE CONCEPTS OF TRADITION AND FOOD HERITAGE

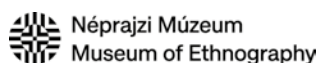
LIVING EATING HABITS, REVITALIZED FOODWAYS AND THE CONCEPTS OF TRADITION AND FOOD HERITAGE

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ELTE Research Centre for the Humanities Institute of Ethnography
and Museum of Ethnography



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FOREWORD

It is with great pleasure that I introduce this volume, a collection of articles based on the papers presented at SIEF 24th International Ethnological Food Research Conference in Budapest in September 2024. Over three days, 44 speakers from 14 countries gathered across 9 sessions to examine the role of food and related traditions in shaping or preserving the identities of communities, with a focus on globalisation, festivalisation, and sustainability.

This book continues the documentation of the long-standing work of The International Ethnological Food Research Group, founded in 1970. Since the first conference held in Lund in that year, the organisation of biannual conferences has created a dynamic meeting place for food scholars in and beyond academia. With a few exceptions, the conference proceedings have been published in book format. This is one in a line of more than twenty volumes of conference proceedings. These publications provide an excellent overview of the development and diversity of ethnological food research. While a more comprehensive overview would need more space, let me give some brief reflections about the continuity and the changes observable over the years.

The first volume, *Ethnological Food Research in Europe and USA*, edited by professors Nils-Arvid Bringéus and Günter Wiegmann in 1971, presented two concepts that are still focal points in ethnological food research today – Meals and Foodways. The social dimensions of eating and the extraordinary capacity of food to cross borders of time, space and social milieu are dimensions that continue to fascinate and evoke new research questions to be studied.

It is not just food in itself that crosses borders, the ethnological food research community itself is also interesting in this regard. From the beginning, scholars from both Eastern and Western Europe, Asia and America, have been active at the

conferences. As a refreshing contrast to more traditional and introspective scientific conferences, food enthusiasts from outside academia were welcomed to these meetings. Researchers and practitioners, science professionals and journalists, found a platform at the conferences on which to interact, to exchange positive feedback and critical remarks, and to explore new paths. All in a friendly and open atmosphere. It was a foodie community long before the term was invented. I dare to say that the SIEF Food Working group (the title since 1994) is a truly global, inclusive, and friendly cross-border community.

Since I attended my first conference in Basel/Vevey in 2002, some remarkable changes have occurred. At that time, food was not the hottest topic in European ethnology. But gradually, a new generation of talented researchers approached the field with fresh eyes and new perspectives. Boosted by an increased interest in the gastronomic dimensions of food, and a growing awareness of how many of the global challenges are related to how we eat, the research community has grown over the years. This volume is a fine example of that development.

The disruptive technologies associated with digitalisation have had an impact both on the research itself and publication channels. Paired with a New public management approach to research, where the number of publications in highly-ranked peer reviewed journals has become essential for any academic career, the book format with compilations of conference proceedings is no longer as common as it used to be. This is quite a dramatic change since I started as a Ph.D. student at the turn of the millennium. To merit academically, publishing in books was essential in the Humanities. A doctoral thesis accepted by a publishing house was an important step towards getting a research position. To be promoted to associate professor, another monograph should have been published, and yet another to have the chance to become professor. Journal articles were written, a lot of teaching was undertaken and administrative tasks were carried out, but the books were at the centre of the qualification. It was in the ability to write large syntheses that reached beyond a narrow part of the research community that the academic hierarchy was established.

Second best to monographs was to publish articles in books edited by renowned international scholars. I still remember the pride I felt when I saw my first 'international' article in the book from the Basel conference, named *Changing Tastes. Food Culture and the Processes of Industrialization*. As so many of the books, this was carefully edited by Patricia Lysaght. Anyone familiar with the thoroughness and standards of Professor Lysaght's work finds it to be insulting to not count the volumes

of the SIEF Food Conferences as 'peer reviewed.' Sadly, however, that is what many of the younger researchers experience today. Only journal articles have merit.

Don't get me wrong. The multitude of journals, accessible online, has done a lot for progress and outreach in ethnological food research. But I still find volumes like this, published in 'proper' book format, to be a valuable contribution to food culture research. They facilitate the experience of getting a comprehensive overview of current research while having a good time of cozy armchair reading.

In that spirit, I hope you will enjoy this collection of articles on 'Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage!

Håkan Jönsson,
Chair, SIEF Food Working Group



INTRODUCTION

In September 2024 Hungary hosted the SIEF 24th International Ethnological Food Research Conference – just over four decades after the 3rd Conference had been organised there in October 1983. Professor em. Eszter Kisbán, an organiser of the 1983 conference and co-editor of that conference's proceedings (1986), also participated in the 2024 event.

The 2024 conference, the theme of which was: 'Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage', was organised by the Museum of Ethnography and the Institute of Ethnology HUN-REN Research Centre for the Humanities (ELTE Research Centre for the Humanities from August 2025), Budapest. The conference opening was performed by Dr. Lajos Kemecsi, Director General of the Museum of Ethnography, Dr. Balázs Balogh, Director General of the HUN-REN Research Centre for the Humanities, and Director of the HUN-REN Research Centre for the Humanities Institute of Ethnology, and Prof. Håkan Jönsson, Lund University, Sweden, current Chair of the SIEF Food Research Working Group. On 18th–19th September, the conference programme, consisting of lectures, including keynote addresses, and a thematic tour of a food heritage exhibition, was carried out in the excellent and welcoming environment of the Museum of Ethnography, while on the evening of the 19th of September, the conference group enjoyed dinner locally at Gundel Restaurant (founded 1894), the 'only Hungarikum restaurant' in Hungary.

On the 20th of September, the participants travelled north of Budapest to the Hungarian Open Air Museum in Szentendre, Pest County, for the third and final day of the conference. Here, the conference group was officially welcomed by Dr. Miklós Cseri, Director General of the Museum, and a memorable full-day, museum-organised programme, consisting of a series of lectures, a food heritage (Hungarian) workshop, and guided, small-group, food heritage interpretation

visits in the museum, followed. The official closing session of the 2024 conference also took place here.

Thanks to the contributors and the generous support of the conference organisers, it has been possible to publish the conference proceedings. Included in this volume are the four plenary keynote lectures, delivered by Professors Cristina Grasseni ('Re-tooling Food Heritage: Revitalizing Communities and Landscapes'), Ágnes Fülemile ('Goulash and Governance: The Politics of Foodways in Socialist Hungary. Culinary Transformation and Everyday Life (1948–1989)'; Lucy M. Long ('Personal Memory, Collective Heritage, and Quandaries of Tradition: Three Appalachian Mountain Dishes'), and Dr. Eszter Csonka-Takács ('Food Heritage: Paradigm Shift in the Implementation Practices of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage'), respectively, in the course of the conference. The remaining twenty-nine articles in these proceedings, reviewed briefly here, are arranged in seven parts: Part I: 'Dealing with Food in Institutions and Organisations Working with Cultural Heritage I'; Part II: 'Food and Foodways as Heritage-Making: Local Development Strategies and Tourism'; Part III: 'The Manifold Meanings of Food and Heritage'; Part IV: 'Gender, Identity, "Invention" and Food Heritage'; Part V: 'Ethnic, Local and Traditional Food: Meanings in a Comparative Perspective'; Part VI: 'Food Heritage in Times of Crisis'; Part VII: 'Dealing with Food in Institutions and Organisations Working with Cultural Heritage II'.

The interdisciplinary collection of articles in this volume represents the thematic streams of the discussions over the three-day conference period. Since the conference had strong museum connections, questions concerning the representation of food heritage, first in an indoor museum context, were considered in a number of papers. Also, the processes involved, and the effects of the designation of local dishes and food traditions as Intangible Cultural Heritage under the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), came up for discussion (Part I), as did the impact of the re-evaluation of certain foods and foodways and their promotion as regional cultural heritage in local and national development, and in cross-border and tourism strategies (Part II).

That food can have many different meanings for different actors in the field of heritage and that these can change over time in response to factors such as modern-tradition making, commercialisation, market and hegemonic forces and globalisation, is also dealt with in these proceedings, as are the possible roles – and responsibilities –

of ethnologists and ethnological institutions, acting as experts in heritage-making processes (Part III).

A number of papers focus on the role of specific dishes in the ethnic revitalisation of particular communities after the fall of communism in Eastern Europe in the 1980s, and on the processes involved thereafter in the selection and recognition of a representative heritage food for a particular country or region. The part that perception of the texture, taste and flavour, as well as the nutritional value of certain foods, and the effects of climate change on traditional food systems, plays in (extreme) environmental adaptation by communities, is also addressed, as is the invention of a regional identity in the southern hemisphere for milk, an erstwhile colonial food, and the construction and maintenance of an ideal national identity in a northern European setting, through the gendered promotion of that very same food (Part IV).

The role of food and meals, including festive foods and dishes, and food-heritage programmes, as mediators, messengers, and channels of communication, and as indicators of identity, community cohesion, and also of culinary adaptation, in multi-ethnic and diasporic communities, also features in this volume. Considered also are the motivations and processes involved in the selection of traditional dishes as part of the conscious construction of a national memory policy of a particular country (Mongolia) in the face of rapid urbanisation, globalisation, and cultural diffusion tendencies, in recent decades (Part V).

Turning to the future – while bearing in mind the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic (2020–2023) on culinary culture worldwide – what must also be taken into account are the climatic and environmental challenges that lie ahead and which will inevitably impact food availability and supply over time and space. Thus, a number of papers discuss, *inter alia*, the necessity of safeguarding bio-diversity and of maintaining and fostering unique culinary traditions, especially those linking contemporary culinary practices with age-old sustainable economies. The potential health and food-security roles of fermented foods – with scientifically-assessed and approved enhanced nutritional value – in modern-day diets, are also addressed, as is how and why, in today's world, a particular dish with a combination of ingredients (stew) prepared and consumed in a houseless social setting, can also be viewed as a repository of the representative cultural values of the unhoused group in which its primary function is basically nutritional (Part VI).

Food heritage presentation and interpretation in an open-air museum setting – specifically the Hungarian Open Air Museum in Szentendre – including the representation of specific regional dishes in this context, is also discussed in this work, as is how a collection of gastronomic goods can have different heritage meanings when exhibited in different cultural locations, contexts and settings (Part VII).

This volume, the fruit of the interdisciplinary SIEF 24th International Ethnological Food Research Conference 2024, is, like its earlier counterparts from the 1970s onwards, a further contribution to the history of food studies in Europe and further afield.

Budapest and Dublin, 2025.

Anikó Báti and Patricia Lysaght
(Editors)

KEYNOTE LECTURES



CRISTINA GRASSENÌ

RE-TOOLING FOOD HERITAGE: REVITALIZING COMMUNITIES AND LANDSCAPES

ABSTRACT

Crafting futures is the most ambitious and timely challenge for food heritage. This requires re-tooling the notion of heritage as not only memory of the past, meaning of the present, and legacy for the future, but also as an act of re-imagination, re-articulation, and re-production of food and its conditions of possibility.

I will interpret the conference theme, ‘revitalizing foodways and food heritage’, in the light of a longitudinal ethnography with mountain cheese-makers in the Italian Alps.¹ Building on ongoing anthropological research on food, solidarity, and the reinvention of heritage in Europe, I propose a critical exploration of their nexus. Cheese is my chosen entry point to bring to the surface broader discourses and practices around food heritage that shape local communities and landscapes. In particular, I will describe the ‘heritage arena’, namely the competitive market for traditional producers, and its recent, post-Covid-19 developments.

The story of my case study in brief goes like this: in 2014 the cheese-makers of a tiny valley in Lombardy, Val Taleggio, obtained an EU Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) for one of their mountain cheeses, *Strachitunt*. I will show how this strategic choice is part of a dynamic process, re-tooling and revitalising food heritage, not only for local economies, but also for working landscapes and more broadly, for

1 Reference to this study: Cristina Grasseni: Re-tooling Food Heritage: Revitalizing Communities and Landscapes. In Anikó Báti and Patricia Lysaght (eds.): *Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage*. Budapest: ELTE RCH Institute of Ethnology – Museum of Ethnography, 2025. pp. 23–34.

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future-making. This process harnesses the discourse and performance of *typicity*, of patrimony, and of locality: as markers of distinction, as boundary-making tools, as keywords articulating a vision for sovereignty over one's future.

In my book I compared the stories of significant neighbours of *Strachitunt*: Bitto, Branzi and Formai de Mut – which are partly or entirely produced in the mountains north of Bergamo, and Taleggio and *stracchino* – which are nowadays associated with the Lombard lowlands – but originate in transhumant traditions of moving herds from the uplands to the lowlands and back again.² The divergent histories, uneven prestige and commercial fortunes of these cheeses put the story of *Strachitunt* in perspective. All of them originate from a tradition of mobile dairy husbandry and cheese-making, straddling peaks and plains, summers and winters, fresh grass and hay, craft and industry. Made in the high-pastures of the valleys north of Bergamo, Bitto, Formai de Mut and Branzi are variations of one ideal-type upland cheese: cooked, fat, round-shaped, made in the summer and matured in the winter; yellowish 10-kilo wheels with a brushed and hardened crust – high-prestige, similar to Parmesan or Grana. On the other hand, Taleggio and *stracchino* are respectively the certified and non-certified versions of fresh, uncooked, square, whitish, soft, flowery-crust slabs of two kilos at most, made for common consumption and cheap markets.

Upland cheese is for discerning and affluent markets. Lowland cheese is the unassuming by-product of transhumance. In fact, this soft white square cheese, called *strachì* in the Bergamasque dialect, was documented in the second half of the 19th century in the first survey of Italian agriculture after unification under one kingdom, in 1882. Count Stefano Jacini stated that 'the word *stracchino* derives from the small soft cheeses produced during the journey from the mountain to the lowland and vice versa. These [herders] make it swiftly in their resting stations, with milk from tired cows after their long journey'.³ *Strac* means 'tired' in Bergamasque dialect, hence *strachì*, the Bergamasque word for *stracchino*. Transhumant herders were necessarily also cheese-makers. They would transform their cows' milk while stopping on the journey taking the cattle from the upper pastures of the Lombard Alps, after summer grazing, to the lower reaches of the rivers, for the winter. They

2 Grasseni, Cristina: *The Heritage Arena* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2017).

3 Jacini, Stefano: *Atti della Giunta per la Inchiesta Agraria e sulle condizioni della classe agricola. Volume VI, Tomo I, Fasc. I. Relazione del Commissario Conte Stefano Jacini, Senatore del Regno, sulla DECIMA CIRCOSCRIZIONE (provincie di Pavia – meno i circondari di Voghera e Bobbio – Milano, Cremona, Mantova, Como, Sondrio, Bergamo e Brescia)* (Rome: Forzani e C., Tipografi del Senato, 1882), 27.

could not even afford to heat the milk, and would curdle it at milking temperature, hastily, in makeshift stations.

This production technique, covering a very broad area though pivoting around alpine valleys, eventually achieved a geographic indication in 1979 as ‘Taleggio’ cheese. Unfortunately, through, the protocol of production for Taleggio cheese granted rights to an area as big as half of northern Italy, straddling Lombardy, Piedmont, and Veneto. Taleggio cheese failed its valley of origin – Val Taleggio – at least in the eyes of its residents and entrepreneurs, because the protected denomination commercially favoured lowland, large dairy producers who kept production abundant and prices low. An unexploited ‘patrimony’, a lost ‘typicity’, Taleggio cheese failed to deliver distinction for its valley. It failed to deliver an exploitable unique selling point for the local cheese-makers. This failure looms large in the memory of the people of Val Taleggio, a dwindling community of about 800 residents, who resent having been forgotten and marginalised by the dairy economy they gave their name to.

All of these cheeses are connected by the history and eventual disappearance of transhumance. But transhumance is appropriated strategically by each, in different, innovative ways. The production of heritage-value for *Strachitunt* cheese was an extended process that brought future-making to the fore, aligning socio-economic actors to obtain a Protected Denomination of Origin (PDO) for their valley *only*. This pivotal moment is only one in a longer history, during which Val Taleggio lost ‘cultural ownership’ of their Taleggio cheese. In effect, the valley’s consortium fought for a cheese of their own by another name. They researched the history of *strachi* – a humble transhumant cheese – and won a PDO for *Strachitunt* (which is, they claim, a very specific type of round-shaped *strachi* made during the summer season in the high pastures of their valley, *only*).

Geographic indications play a key role in supporting food economies, in Italy and beyond. Therefore, the cheese-makers of Val Taleggio claimed a PDO for *another* cheese, from their valley *only*. They re-invented *Strachitunt*. A consortium ‘for the safeguarding of Strachitunt cheese’ was established in October 2002, but it took them more than eleven years to obtain a PDO, mostly due to appeals and conflicts with other producers in the neighbouring valleys and lowlands. The EU-wide PDO trademark for *Strachitunt* was eventually registered in March 2014.

The public audition for the protocol of production of *Strachitunt* in 2010 showed how economic and political actors compete and sometimes converge to define heritage-food in the contemporary market, speaking at once to national and European regulators, as well as to very local competition. Cast as distant and inscrutable, European normative agencies magnify and heighten very local but very real animosities. This was a veritable war, a war of the cheeses, fought with press-releases, telefax, appeals to the regional government and the Ministry of Agriculture, archival research, public testimonies, and counter-research. For the few hundred people involved, the cause of obtaining a Europe-wide protected denomination for *Strachitunt* was believed to make the difference between becoming a dying valley or following in the footprints of other local producers, such as the 'Bitto rebels' – heritage cheese-makers who fought bitterly, and, commercially, won, with the help of Slow Food, against larger consortia.

The metaphor of the arena (both a theatre and a fighting ground) allows me to dwell on the rhetorical and practical ways in which people pragmatically balance authenticity and anachronism, opportunistic choices and passionate identification in heritage, as both a medium and a tool to reproduce themselves as meaning-making beings. The entrepreneurs, farmers and administrators of Val Taleggio lay claim to their cheese as a form of sovereignty over local resources. To fight and negotiate for a geographic indication was in this case a political strategy of future-making. The war metaphor underlines how the reinvention of cheese as a heritage item is a process to which many competing actors concur – key local producers, food journalists, local and regional politicians and civil servants.

The trope of a performed drama allows me to expand this group of stakeholders into a broader 'imagined community' of cheese-makers, cheese-mongers and cheese *eaters* (including local consumers, but also exporters and mediators, designers and marketing experts, food activists and connoisseurs). This is consistent with scholarship underlining the transition, in heritage-language and practice, from an expectation of communities 'bearing' cultural heritage to one of 'participating' in it.⁴ As an example, I quote an audio-recorded public speech by the President of the Consortium for the Safeguarding of *Strachitunt*cheese in 2006:

What is a consortium? It is a group of entrepreneurs who represent the entire value and supply chain of one product. These entrepreneurs have realised that

⁴ Adell, Nicolas – Bendix, Regina – Bortolotto, Chiara and Tauschek, Markus, eds.: *Between Imagined Communities and Communities of Practice* (Göttingen: Universitätsverlag Göttingen, 2015), 8.

they own a product, which has been handed down to them from previous generations and that they can make. They consider this product unique, and in danger of being imitated. A consortium is an institution that preserves something that can be *reinvented*. Those who make this product somewhere else, in a different guise, under different conditions, *invent* it. This is a fundamental distinction. We can do a few things to make our product in slightly updated ways, with new tools and everything that innovation has offered us in recent decades. But we are not *inventing* anything. We are *reinventing* something that already existed, maybe dwindling, but continuously. We give it a new image, new clothes, and a tipicity [*una tipicità*]. If we'll be able to do so, we'll make it *consistent*, and we'll put it back on the market.

Typicity here is not a synonym of tradition. It designates both environmental and historical circumstances but it is intrinsically dynamic, broader and by definition strategic. Precisely because of its intrinsically strategic character, however, this reinvention is ongoing: it is constantly re-pitched and re-performed in relation to the actors' reciprocal repositioning.

Pierre Bourdieu, talking about 'the field of cultural production', explains that it is structured around the distribution of specific properties associated with success (such as literary prestige). Michael Di Giovine adapts Bourdieu's analysis of 'positions and position-takings'⁵ to 'fields of heritage production'.⁶ These mediate and connect the social production of recognition (such as typicity, for food) with the very serious business of making a living, for the socioeconomic actors involved. Following Appadurai, the politics of authenticity and the politics of connoisseurship are but two of the forms that 'politics', understood as 'the link between regimes of value and flows of commodities', can take. His use of the word 'arena' pertains specifically to how 'large scale exchanges' interact with 'more humble flows of things'.⁷

While this was a strategy for revitalisation of the patrimony, community, and working landscape of the valley, the certification profoundly transformed the heritage of *Strachitunt* (as it did with Taleggio cheese more than thirty years before). *Strachitunt* PDO is a post-transhumant reinvention of a cheese-making tradition that historically connected alpine pastures and lowlands. From an almost lost recipe, a remnant of transhumance, *Strachitunt* was made into a cheese made *all-year-round* in Val Taleggio, both high up in the pastures and down in the village

5 Bourdieu, Pierre: *The Field of Cultural Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 30.

6 Di Giovine, Michael: *The Heritage-scape: UNESCO, World Heritage, and Tourism* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009).

7 Appadurai, Arjun: 'Commodities and the Politics of Value', in Appadurai, Arjun ed.: *The Social Life of Things. Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3–63.

cooperative. This innovation included the reinvention of this cheese as a patrimony of the entire community (not only of the economic stakeholders that are directly involved).

This only worked as a result of active and continuous re-positionings, including commercial tactics, symbolic politics, and the pervasive performance of a culture of gastronomic discernment (sensorial, historical, genealogical, geographic, agronomic and culinary). Against this elaborate backdrop, heritage is performed. Cheese-makers perform their own roles, showcasing hand milking, or curdling, or cheese-tasting; at tourist venues, professional fairs, and eco-museum installations (for example, at the Slow Food Salon in Turin, or during free educational workshops in the valley). In the cultural mobilisation of food as heritage, the aspects of guardianship and reinvention are conjoined.

Claiming control of a cheese as heritage falls nothing short of advocating sovereignty over a valley, according to the political alliances at hand, pre-existing rivalries, and margins for manoeuvring. Entire localities are called into play in the moral labour of properly harnessing, or 'valorizing', one's heritage. 'Valorizing' involves a number of social actors (not only dairy farmers, cheese-makers or refiners but also public administrators, consumers' associations and tourist entrepreneurs, for instance). It requires that they cooperate to identify, describe, study, safeguard, extol, reproduce and market specific items of tangible and intangible heritage. Local politicians, entrepreneurs and activists skillfully trade in the most viable currency of the moment (whether European PDOs or Slow Food Presidia).

Entrepreneurs and administrators choose divergent paths to 'valorize' their cheeses. Small and fiercely territorial geographic indications such as *Strachitunt* coexist with other forms of safeguarding other niche productions in the same area. Some opt for the distinction of hard-core authenticity, with support of powerful associations such as Slow Food – as in the case of Bitto. Others use more malleable but less distinctive quality certifications such as quality trademarks bestowed by local chambers of commerce. Others linger between quantity and quality, caught in the chasm, without being able to leverage sustainable prices.

Rethinking livelihoods through heritage, especially in the mountains today, is not just a question of marketing but of political imagination. It calls for the added value of heritage to be made evident and relevant not only to consumers, but to 'communities'. The result is a skillful *and* precarious reinvention of the everyday,

often dependent on selling ambivalent notions, including the very concept of community.

One occasion during which the purchase of notions such as community and solidarity, rather than distinction, became evident, was during the Covid-19 pandemic. The emergency facilitated a convergence – between food activists and heritage food producers. Just as Corona was breaking out in Bergamo, the Consortium for *Strachitunt* happened to hold a conference in Val Taleggio bringing together representatives of Bergamo's solidarity economy networks and of other cheese consortia. They had made an exceptional financial and communication effort, inviting a broader-than-usual palette of speakers, from environmental scientists to environmentalist organisations, from representatives of international associations of craft cheese makers to spokespersons of alternative food networks.

The mission of the three-day meeting was to rethink local cheese production in the name of future-making, weaving together and mingling diverse and even contradictory keywords and networks: the Made in Italy and sustainability, family, territory and global networks. The prickly question was, whether geographic indications were not beginning to look like straitjackets, tying producers too much to their consortia and to boundary-making, rather than creating new alliances.

Now, the area of production for *Strachitunt* is very close to the town of Bergamo, which headlined in world news in the Spring of 2020 as a European hotspot in the Covid-19 pandemic. On the first day of the symposium, 21 February 2020, Covid-Patient number 1 was identified in Lombardy. On 23 February, patients were in hospital with grave symptoms. A strict lockdown was enforced on March 8th nationwide, thus impeding the logistics of distribution and consumption for many small-scale producers such as those of Val Taleggio. But on the eve of lockdown, these speakers and conference participants had woven networks which turned out to be crucial just weeks later.

Local producers suddenly had to think beyond quality certification and specialist shops to reach their customers. In Val Taleggio, the cooperative of producers appealed online to local consumers of the surrounding province, via Facebook, Instagram and simply via Whatsapp groups and mailing lists, asking them to buy their cheese in the name of solidarity.

Through the conference participants, me included, the cheese-makers connected with pre-existing solidarity economy networks active in the area, who responded by commissioning about five hundred collective orders within a matter of weeks. These activists are known locally as Solidarity Purchase Groups and are comprised of citizens who want to consume responsibly, for example from local producers through short food chains. They organise collective bulk-orders and they have been active throughout Italy since the 1990s. I happened to have been a member when I was living in Bergamo.⁸

Previously, these groups had not been interested in heirloom productions *per se*, precisely because they are often marketed at high prices and through a discourse of excellence and distinction. They are, therefore, perceived as niche and elitist, often associated with gourmand circles. In a sense, the logic of distinction of geographic indications and Slow Food Presidia runs counter to the anti-capitalist and anti-consumerist inclinations of solidarity economy.

On the one hand, food activists wish to express solidarity with farmers, and food producers, including heritage ones, *who abide by certain values* – for example, small scale, ecological sustainability, animal welfare, fiscal transparency etc.⁹ Heritage cheese producers on the other hand compete for premium prices on a global market using notions of excellence, authenticity and singularity, especially in the context of the European system for Protected Designations of Origin. Food activists are not necessarily moved by the distinctive quality or cultural heritage of the food their local territories produce, and this is sometimes a missed chance.

Vice versa, self-organised networks of alternative food procurement are often overlooked, if not disdained, by heritage marketing. The glossy brochures and websites only celebrate the distinction and excellence of culinary production, not their accessibility, or fairness of their conditions of labour. Also in terms of lifestyles and personal connections, there is not too much of an overlap between the entrepreneurial world of PDO consortia and chambers of commerce on the one hand, and the ethical and critical consumers engaging in direct provisioning and short food chains on the other even in a small place like Bergamo.

8 Grasseni, Cristina: *Beyond Alternative Food Networks. Italy's Solidarity Purchase Groups* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013).

9 Siniscalchi, Valeria and Harper, Krista eds.: *Food Values in Europe* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019).

However, the Covid-19 pandemic emergency urged an open and non-elitist communication, to broaden and diversify distribution channels, which was emphasised and enabled also by the local (digital) press. The breaking down of global logistics under lockdown brought about novel appreciation of local, inhabited, productive agricultural landscapes. The working landscape of Val Taleggio could be viewed anew, as a valued resource for a broader constituency. Marketing had to compromise with the language of locality and solidarity. The semantics of heritage shifted, in this period, from one of mountain cheese as 'dairy excellence' to one of mountain cheese as genuine, local, produced by farmers close-by and in need of help.¹⁰

The groups who literally bought this semantics of proximity and thus began to support local economies, were driven by a process of identification with the popular and ecological roots, rather than by the distinction, of mountain cheese. However, this emotional identification with local foods glosses over a lingering contradiction. Heritage foods should and do embody folk knowledge – the ecologies and histories of local territories; but they have sometimes become inaccessible to popular consumption because of their price, their niche availability and logistics, and a marketing style based on social distinction.

While this is often the only viable strategy for a sustainable business in the highly competitive and often ephemeral market of the 'heritage arena', it makes it all the more pertinent to evaluate the potentials and limits of the convergence of socio-economic actors coming from these diverse networks and ideologies. They supported each other in times of urgency, as happened during the Covid-19 pandemic, but this serendipitous, temporary, and evanescent solidarity has not changed the nature of their structural relations, dominated by the market.¹¹

In fact, some of the emergency-driven solidarity-wave was subsequently lost to digital marketing, which was appropriated and conventionalised by supermarket chains and other types of platform economies. In any case, the pandemic did not, in the long-term change the nature of market relations based on reciprocal convenience rather than on the resilience of local economies. For example, in the case of Val Taleggio, the producers' appeal to local consumers deployed digitally-enabled forms

10 Grasseni, Cristina: 'From branding to solidarity: the COVID-19 impact on marketing Strachitunt cheese from Val Taleggio, Italy', *Acta Geographica Slovenica* 62/2 (2022), 75–85.

11 Strasser, Susan ed.: *Commodifying Everything. Relationships of the Market* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

of direct sale, which worked very well in the immediate situation, but did not develop them into more complex forms of community-supported agriculture or participatory certification, which would require lengthier processes of negotiation and a deeper synergy on goals.

‘Crafting futures’ for food heritage would require re-tooling local markets to help re-produce relevant communities and working landscapes.¹² If we consider the multiple convergences between local economy networks and heritage food producers, we notice how many stakes they have in common: a shared commitment to transparent chains of production and distribution; the recognition of the added value of local foods; the pledge to find ways of a fair retribution to producers through adequate prices; the awareness of cultural and environmental sustainability; and the intention to provide a protected environment for local economies; so that they can benefit their communities. The ways food activists and heritage food producers go about this goal, however, diverge.

Heritage marketing operates through circuits of added-value creation: through certifications, geographical indications, and premium prices. On the other hand, local-economies’ activists tend to operate through grassroots circuits of ethical consumption, self-provisioning, and homesteading. Food heritage actors need to choose whom to ally with, and what it means in practice to strategise in terms of revitalising communities and landscapes.

In my previous work on the transformation of animal husbandry in the Alps, I investigated the standardisation of dairy farming and witnessed how upland cheese-making was being driven away from high-pasture mountain-huts to lowland creameries.¹³ The introduction of EU-wide hygiene protocols at the end of the 1990s was one of the many ways in which artisan cheese was being repositioned by the global forces of a ‘field of production.’

Reinventing *Strachitunt* meant calibrating its ‘ecology of production,’ a phrase I borrow from Heather Paxson,¹⁴ to the increasing pressures to standardise procedures, environments and operations. But it further entailed a symbolic

12 Grasseni, Cristina: ‘Crafting futures through cheese-making in Val Taleggio (Northern Italy);’ *Gastronomica* 23/1 (2023), 51–64.

13 Grasseni, Cristina: *Developing Skill, Developing Vision. Practices of Locality at the Foot of the Alps* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009).

14 Paxson, Heather: *The Life of Cheese: Crafting Food and Value in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

calibration, namely the transformation from a perceived 'traditional' yet everyday foodstuff into a distinctive item of 'food heritage'. Local production systems had to be *calibrated* to normative, commercial, and communicative expectations that have purchase both on international economic circuits and on very local arrangements.

This does not mean that the alpine cheeses I am talking about have suddenly begun to sell on international markets – though some of them do, and have done for some time. Rather, it means that they had to be entirely refashioned *as if* such potentiality was at hand. The arena they choose as audience, although in practice very local, is symbolically, rhetorically and normatively global. In the valleys of Bergamo, the local dairy industry has historically invested in certifications and designations, inculcating the distinction of mountain cheese also with the help of celebrity chefs and food journalism. *Strachitunt* was heralded as the 'unique selling point' of Val Taleggio with gustatory and moral suasion from a number of paladins: initially Slow Food, then the valley's own Eco-museum, eventually the PDO certification that was 11 years in the making.

The Covid-19 pandemic brought unexpected windfalls and a new aperture in terms of visibility and contacts. Novel alliances include the UNESCO creative cities network, which enlists Bergamo for Gastronomy. *Strachitunt* also featured in 2021 among the local heritage cheeses representing Bergamo at the annual cheese expo *Forme*, with the imaginary title of 'European capital of cheeses'. Since 2020, then, some entrepreneurs have mobilised a discourse of 'solidarity', relying less on the exclusivity of tradition and more on the importance of keeping localities alive. They pledge the capacity to 'innovate' and 'adapt' while salvaging the peculiar, superior material *and moral* qualities of their cheeses. A discourse of guardianship and sustainability with added attention to communication has matured in the realisation that their entrepreneurial role requires responsibilities beyond selling, and beyond cheese.

Food heritage requires continuous recalibrations within specific 'fields of production', which include place-based designations as one of – but not the only – major force fields. The heritage arena articulates and shapes both the marketability and the political capacity of food to mobilise resources and passions, fostering conflicts. But it is alliances, in the rural valleys of the Italian Alps, that determine the very serious business of economic viability, ecologic continuity, and even demographic survival.¹⁵

15 'This speech was delivered as a keynote at the 2024 SIEF food conference, drawing on research published in Grasseni (2021) and Grasseni (2022). The author is grateful to the conference organizers and volume editors for the invitation and editorial engagement'.

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ÁGNES FÜLEMILE

GOULASH AND GOVERNANCE: THE POLITICS OF FOODWAYS IN SOCIALIST HUNGARY

CULINARY TRANSFORMATION AND EVERYDAY LIFE (1948–1989)

ABSTRACT

This study examines the changes in the lifestyle and eating habits of Hungarian society during the radical social transformations of the era of socialism, placing the process within its socio-historical context. In the centrally planned economy, the key aspects of food supply, trade, and catering were inseparable from the intentions of domestic and foreign policy, sociopolitical considerations, propaganda, and the techniques of exercising power. After the harsh decade of the 1950s, the consolidation period, although with limitations, promoted a welfare-consumerist model that naturally influenced not only the complete institutionalised framework of nutrition – leading to an unprecedented homogenisation of culinary culture – but also affected the cultural environment of individual, family, and small-community decisions, tastes, and habits. Within this force field, the main directions of interpreting culinary traditions are as follows: What happens to the homegrown, regional traditions brought from rural life? What is the fate and role of national cuisine that is considered Hungarian? How does the regime treat the professionals operating in the supply chain? What happens to the tradition of ‘good bourgeois cuisine’; beyond, can it survive within the framework of ‘actually existing socialism’, and if so, what does it even mean – has it had an impact on the broader masses? Are there traces of international cuisine, and, if so, how do they manifest themselves?

What does the food placed on the table signify? What aspirations, identity markers, attachments, resilience, memory preservation, and nostalgia might lie behind the individual choices of where, under what circumstances, and what we eat? The study explores these questions, analysing how food became a site of ideological negotiation, cultural adaptation, and personal meaning in socialist Hungary.

ANTECEDENTS: FOLK TRADITIONS, BOURGEOIS REFINEMENT, AND CULINARY NATIONALISM

Before delving into the main topic, it is necessary to briefly address a few key points.¹ The 18th and 19th centuries brought a wave of agricultural innovations and the spread of new crops in Hungary, which had an impact on nutrition across the entire spectrum of society.

This era witnessed the flourishing of folk art, which expressed the newfound self-awareness and distinctive aesthetic of the peasantry, following the emancipation of serfs in the mid-19th century. As a result of dynamic capitalist development after the *Ausgleich* ('Compromise') between Austria and Hungary in 1867, there was increased mobility and intensified contact between rural and urban environments. Paradoxically, modernity had an inspiring effect on rural communities, which, for a time, still retained the ability to adapt external influences into their own systems of culture and aesthetics.

During the era of national awakening, efforts were made to identify and emphasise national characteristics in various symbolic systems of culture, including cuisine. The fascination with folk culture reinforced the invention of national 'Self'. The great industrial and world exhibitions of the second half of the 19th century and the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, popularised interest in vernacular styles. This period also saw the emergence of cottage industries, applied arts movements, and the formation of a national aesthetic in various artistic genres rooted in folk traditions. Nation-building elites played an important role in this delineation process. They actively shaped the image of folk culture and had a role in the construction of nationalised frameworks of everyday civic life.

During Europe's and the Austro-Hungarian monarchy's dynamic bourgeois development, travel, and leisure activities – once exclusive to the nobility – became accessible to the growing middle class, facilitated by an emerging professional hospitality industry. Part of identity-formation was the discovery, creative invention, and dissemination of national culinary traditions.

¹ Reference to this study: Ágnes Fülemile: *Goulash and Governance: The Politics of Foodways in Socialist Hungary. Culinary Transformation and Everyday Life (1948–1989)*. In Anikó Bádi and Patricia Lysaght (eds.): *Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage*. Budapest: ELTE RCH Institute of Ethnography – Museum of Ethnography, 2025. pp. 35–76.

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The inspiration for shaping Hungarian national cuisine came from the romantic appreciation of newly-discovered folk culture. Paprika (red pepper powder), once dismissed as a low-regarded inferior peasant spice, along with characteristic shepherd dishes from the Great Hungarian Plains, began appearing on the menus of restaurants catering to the upper classes. The romanticised image of the Great Plains as the epitome of a quintessential Hungarian landscape – and its inhabitants as embodiments of the freedom-loving national spirit of Hungarians – emerged during this time, and is a topos fuelled by both domestic and foreign artistic fascination. This shift was reflected in dietary habits as well, with paprika-infused dishes like goulash and pörkölt stew replacing older meat-and-cabbage-based meals, becoming symbolic staples of national cuisine.² From the mid-19th century onwards, this culinary tradition was refined by a few iconic master chefs, who tamed its rustic flavours along French and Austrian lines to suit the palates of the European upper classes.³ Culinary innovations were spread across the kingdom through hotels, taverns, restaurants, cafés, and middle-class households.

The refinement of peasant dishes into elite cuisine was paralleled by an equally significant reverse process: the dissemination of bourgeois culinary innovations to rural households. The middle-class, as an intermediate social group, was a two-way mediator of cultural influences.

Enlightened reform-efforts of the era were aimed at helping to elevate the countryside and to alleviate its social problems. Cottage industries, women's teacher-training programmes, and agricultural and housekeeping schools proliferated, aided by the joint efforts of local elites, churches, and government agencies. The need for social welfare led to charity efforts based on the establishment of soup kitchens for the poor. Through compulsory military service, men ate regular prescribed meals in army canteens.

2 See Eszter Kisbán's excellent studies on goulash: Kisbán, Eszter, 'From peasant dish to national symbol: An early deliberate example', *Ethnologia Europaea* 19/1 (1988), 95–102; Kisbán, Eszter, *Népi kultúra, közkultúra, jelkép: A gulyás, pörkölt, paprikás* ('Folk Culture, Popular Culture, Symbols: Goulash, Stew, Paprika') *Életmód és tradíció* 4 (Budapest: MTA Néprajzi Kutatóintézet, 1989).

3 A key figure was József Marchal, a Lorraine-born chef who had served European royalty before becoming head chef at Pest's prestigious National Casino and Queen of England Hotel. Marchal's crowning achievement was the organising of the coronation banquet of Franz Joseph I and Queen Elisabeth (Sissy) in 1867, at Buda Castle. Under his influence, a generation of exceptional chefs and pastry chefs – such as Ede Palkovics, Nándor Kedvessy, József C. Dobos, and József Marchal Jr. – emerged, becoming leading figures of the culinary scene in the early 20th century. Another notable example is the Gundel family, a Bavarian-origin dynasty of chefs, closely linked to the Marchals.



Fig. 1. At the 1873 Vienna World's Fair, in keeping with romanticised stereotypes of Hungary, the country's culinary specialities were presented in a tavern (csárda) typical of the Great Plains, alongside live performances by gypsy musicians and shepherds, which was a great success. (*L'Esposizione Universale di Vienna del 1873 Illustrata. Volume Primo.* Milano: Edoardo Sonzogno, 149.)

Boarding schools for girls taught comprehensive household management courses, including cooking, baking, food preservation, meal planning, table setting, kitchen hygiene, dietary meal preparation, kitchen gardening, medicinal-herb cultivation, basic healthcare knowledge, infant care, nursing, sewing, laundry, cleaning, and cost-effective housekeeping. The curriculum promoted economical, yet varied and flavourful, bourgeois cuisine. Alongside the well-known dishes of 'simple Hungarian good bourgeois cuisine', the programmes incorporated regional flavours and select international dishes (Viennese, Bavarian, Czech, and French). The importance of integrating a wider variety of vegetables and fruits into meals was emphasised.⁴

From the 1920s onwards, rational household management was incorporated into the curriculum for the upper grades of elementary schools and secondary schools. Trained instructors, nurses and doctors, held courses in the countryside with the goal of improving existing substandard nutritional and hygienic norms due to deep poverty, and resulting in high child mortality and tuberculosis-related death rates.

While boarding schools were mostly affordable for the middle classes, shorter courses were accessible to the more ambitious peasant, artisan and working-class families. Furthermore, maids and women serving in local and urban middle-class households also transmitted what they had learned in bourgeois families to peasant households. These women were highly regarded, found husbands more easily, and some even became wedding chefs. Between the two World Wars, the radio broadcasted housekeeping lecture series and cooking advice programmes, and educational household manuals and cookbooks were distributed to village libraries.

As a result of these initiatives, a greater variety of soups, vegetable dishes, meat courses, sauces, and pastries spread across the country. Regional differences began to fade, and culinary knowledge became more standardised nationwide. Kitchenware was replaced, and cleanliness and presentation started to follow urban trends.

Thanks in part to the activism of women's organisations, household education continued even during World War II. (In the war years, frugal cooking and substitution methods for scarce ingredients was promoted.) The training programmes persisted into the 1950s, until Hungary's education system underwent

4 About the issue of household-management schools and courses, see Judit Knézy's fine analysis based on extensive research: Knézy, Judit, 'Házartási iskolák, tanfolyamok és a táplálkozási kultúra alakulása a 20. században' ('Domestic science schools, courses, and the development of food culture in the 20th century'), *Herman Ottó Múzeum Évkönyve* XLVII (2008), 489–513.

significant restructuring under socialism, while frugality recipes persisted into the austerity period of 1950s.

The standardisation trends, based on a middle-class model in the pre-war period mentioned above, are particularly relevant to this topic, because they help us to understand the state of the country's general food culture before the communist takeover in 1948, and also highlight the symbolic significance of bourgeois cuisine.

THE POLITICALLY-ENGINEERED ATTEMPT TO TRANSFORM SOCIETY UNDER SOCIALISM – A BROADER CONTEXT

After World War II, half of Hungary's population was agrarian, a significant portion of which consisted of smallholders with just a few acres of land, or entirely of the landless poor. The 1945–1946 agrarian reform, implemented under Soviet oversight, sought to address one of the most pressing social issues of the inter-war period: unresolved land inequality. It also aimed to mobilise peasant labour for postwar agricultural recovery.⁵ As a side-effect, the land-redistribution policy restrengthened the endurance of a traditional middle-peasant value-orientation, and actually prompted a sociological 're-peasantisation'.

The brief democratic interlude from 1945 to 1948 gave way to the communist seizure of power. After the radical nationalisation of private property in several stages, the tightly-controlled planned economy focused on rapid industrialisation, with the income siphoned off from agriculture being used to boost heavy industry. The new regime started to implement harsh Soviet-style agricultural policies. Its forced collectivisation campaign blatantly reversed recent land reforms. Authorities deployed relentless pressure tactics to drive peasants into the collectives. The campaign escalated into systematic persecution, through brutal crop confiscations, kulak blacklists, mass arrests, show trials, and deportations to forced labour camps. The 'dekulakisation' policy systematically eradicated Hungary's most skilled farmers from the agricultural system. This ruthless ideological crusade deliberately sacrificed

⁵ Large estates were expropriated and divided into small plots, thereby redistributing one-third of Hungary's arable land. In total, 650,000 beneficiaries received land, including 400,000 new smallholders and 240,000 existing farmers who gained supplemental plots. The reform altered rural demographics: the landless population shrank from 46% to 17%, while smallholder-farmers surged from 47% to being 80% of the peasantry. Many of the new plots were too small for subsistence purposes. By dismantling larger, more efficient farms, the reform entrenched fragmented, outdated farming practices, rather than fostering modernisation.



Fig. 2. Students for the cooking-baking course with the instructor sitting under the pictures of Marx and Engels, 1957, Dombóvár, Tolna county. (Photo donor: Tibor, Erky-Nagy, Fortepan, photo ID 13 970, 1957)



Fig. 3. Canteen of Thermal Power Plant, Ajka, 1961. (Photo donor: Sándor Bauer, Fortepan, photo ID 110447, 1961)

agricultural productivity and rural social stability in order to break peasant resistance and to enforce total control.

The regime's oppressive agricultural policies triggered massive land abandonment in the early 1950s, with approximately 300,000 peasants fleeing their recently-acquired plots. By 1957, about 650,000 farming families (35% of individual farmers) had become *kétlaki* ('dual residents'), clinging to their land while working in cities – a group that comprised 40% of industrial workers.

The regime systematically vilified these peasant-workers as being backward, uneducated, and ideologically suspect.⁶ Official propaganda – through newspapers, textbooks, films, and newsreels – portrayed rural dwellers as reactionary remnants of feudalism, contrasting them with idealised socialist urbanites. This manufactured urban-rural divide served to justify the elimination of peasant culture as part of the communist modernisation project. The regime's ambiguous demagogic rhetoric about worker-peasant solidarity, and carefully-staged depictions of a 'socialist realist pastoral idyll', failed to counter the pervasive climate of dehumanisation and the growing sense of stigmatised self-identity of the peasants.

The third and final wave of collectivisation (1958–1961), implemented after the crushed 1956 Revolution, served as a form of collective punishment against Hungary's peasantry. This systematic campaign – carried out through persuasion, promises of benefits, and coercion – eliminated private farming by confiscating land, livestock, and tools, the very foundations of peasant life.⁷ Families fractured under the pressure – women and elders typically joined co-operatives while able-bodied men became commuters or fled to cities. Traditional village culture collapsed with stunning speed: old social hierarchies dissolved. The 1960s saw not just the

6 Varga, Zsuzsanna, 'Mit ér a munkás, ha paraszt (is)? A falusi munkásság és a hatalom a Kádár-korszakban' ('What is a worker if he is (also) a Peasant? Rural workers and Power in the Kádár Era'), *Korall* 49 (2012), 40–41.

7 93% of farmland was transferred to state and co-operative ownership; thus, private farming virtually disappeared, with 1.6 million independent former farmers reduced to under 100,000 by the mid-1960s. For the coercive measures used in the last round of collectivisation, see: Balogh, Balázs, 'Egy férfigeneráció sorsa Tápon a téjesztéstől napjainkig' ('The Fate of a Male Generation in Táp from the Collectivisation to the Present Day'), in Péter Berta, and Mihály Hoppál, eds., *Ethnolore XXVI* (Budapest: MTA Néprajzi Kutatóintézet, 2009), 289–325; Ö Kovács, József, 'A paraszti társadalom felszámolása a kommunista diktatúrában. A vidéki Magyarország politikai társadalomtörténete 1945–1965' ('The Abolition of Peasant Society in the Communist Dictatorship. The Political and Social History of Rural Hungary 1945–1965'), *Korall* (2012), 367–382; Kovács, Imre, 'A magyar társadalom "parasztatlanítása" – európai összehasonlításban' ('"De-peasantisation" of Hungarian Society – a European Comparison'), *Századvég* 2003/2, 41–65.



Fig. 4. The staff of Csárda (a tavern) from Bugac, clad in folkish garb at the National Agricultural Exhibition and Fair in 1959, Albertirsai Road Fairground. The inscription on the facade advertises: pork fillet, beef tenderloin, stuffed chicken, goulash, and mutton stew. (Photo donor: Sándor Bauer, Fortepan, photo ID 109623, 1959)

dismantling of cultural attributes of a lifestyle, but the mass abandonment of rural life altogether, and the rejection of peasant identity.⁸

The resulting social transformation was unprecedented: between 1948 and 1965, two-thirds of the population experienced radical mobility. While this was a long-awaited disintegration of the country's rigid semi-feudal structures, the social costs proved devastating. The intolerantly-engineered pace of change triggered widespread social pathologies – Hungary emerged as a European leader in suicide rates, alcoholism, and family breakdown.

While the overt hostility of the 1950s 'kulak' rhetoric had softened by the 1960s, everyday language, public discourse, education and media continued to circulate sarcastic stereotypes about the peasantry, while glorifying collective labourers and industrial workers as socialist role models. The rigid urban-rural hierarchy, with the capital's overt cultural supremacy over provincial areas, instilled lasting inferiority complexes, creating a generation ashamed of its rural roots.

At the same time, consolidation and a considerably better standard of living had made the urban model increasingly attractive to young generations from rural areas. Around 1963–1964, Hungary's communist leadership embarked on a more relaxed, pragmatic form of economic planning, shifting the previous, politically-motivated and exclusive emphasis away from heavy industry to light industry, and to the production of consumer goods.

The foundations of socialist consumerism began taking shape as new retail networks and distribution systems emerged. (While product selection remained limited, these developments marked a significant improvement over the scarcity-driven economy of earlier years.) Infrastructure and transport were improved. Modern housing estates became coveted status-symbols for loyal workers, while the marketing of furniture and appliances promoted new domestic ideals. (Since the 1970s, even a more dynamic wave of building large housing estates continued under the prefabricated housing programme.)

The entry of one million women into the workforce fundamentally challenged the traditional concept of family and household structures and spurred on demand for

8 See the analysis of the deculturation processes of the era: Fülemile, Ágnes, 'Social Change, Dress and Identity Observations on the Disintegration of Peasant Culture as Exemplified by Rural Women's Clothing in Hungary from the First World War to the End of the Kádár Era Socialism', *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* 65/1 (2020), 107–186.

an expanded network of social services, nurseries, schools, canteens, and healthcare facilities. Universal access to free education and to subsidised cultural activities (theatre, museums, books) became hallmarks of the system. Organised leisure activities flourished, with workplace groups and youth organisations arranging excursions and cultural events, while state-sponsored vacation facilities introduced the working class to recreational tourism.

Mass media played a crucial role in the dissemination of new urban lifestyle patterns, while magazines and television (introduced in 1957 but not common in households until the mid-1960s) created new cultural icons as role models. Regular agricultural and industrial fairs effectively promoted new consumer goods, while advertising posters and illuminated billboards began transforming urban streetscapes across Budapest and other cities.

By 1967, ‘reform’ communists – those who proposed economic reforms, had emerged in the communist party leadership. The introduction of the New Economic Mechanism in 1968 created somewhat limited, but more liberal, market conditions. The planned management of the economy was relaxed, and state enterprises were given greater autonomy. There was also an important instrument that affected the food market. The collectivisation of the 1960s, had, in fact, provided a loophole in this context, namely the distribution of backyard farms of limited size, among the members of co-operatives. The importance of household-gardening increased after 1968. The beneficial effect of the reform was to change the nature of farming, from subsistence to commodity production, on backyard holdings. The yields of the household sector were measured at the level of the national economy.⁹ This created a more thriving, secure food market with an abundance of good quality fresh produce.

This period was cut short in 1972, when conservative Brezhnev-era Soviet leaders and domestic hardliners, reversed course. The 1973 oil crisis, triggered by Middle East conflicts, destabilised both Western and socialist economies. As the USSR

9 In key intensive agricultural sectors, such as pork production, grapes, fruit and vegetables, household plots accounted for 50–60% of total production. Their contribution was even more significant for some specialised products – reaching 80–90% for early-season vegetables grown in poly-tunnels – and for some small livestock production. See: Molnár, József, “‘A’ háztáji” (‘The backyard economy’), in István Orosz, Lajos Für, Pál Romány, eds., *Magyarország agrártörténete* (Budapest: Mezőgazda Kiadó, 1996), 631–643, Márkus, István, ‘A hazai mezőgazdasági kisáru-termelés az 1960–70-es években’ (‘Domestic Agricultural Small-Scale Production in the 1960s and 70s’), *Századvég* 1991/2–3, 193–201.

raised the oil prices for its allies and domestic economic reforms stalled, Hungary's growth slowed significantly, stagnating completely by the 1980s. To sustain living standards and social stability, the government secretly took on substantial foreign debt.

By the early 1980s, limited reforms resumed, permitting small private businesses to operate and granting state firms more autonomy. This partial market liberalisation, combined with Hungary's agrarian potential and relatively well-working food industry, improved consumer access – funded by Western loans – and created relative prosperity in Hungary, compared to other Eastern Bloc nations. This unique system of soft dictatorship of the late Kádár-era, earned Hungary labels such as 'goulash communism', 'fridge-socialism' and 'the happiest barrack', characterised by full employment and strong welfare benefits. While these policies fostered a sense of security for the population, they came at the cost of a soaring national debt.

SHIFTING FOODWAYS AND CONSUMPTION PATTERNS UNDER CENTRALISED MANAGEMENT

After the above general political and socio-historical context, let us focus on foodways-related aspects of the era. Following the hunger, food shortages and the black market in food during World War II, and the post-war reconstruction period, a resulting one-sided and deficient nutrition system was still the norm in the 1950s. By the 1960s, the food supply stabilised in line with the intentions of socio-political economic policy. Food production started to be secured, trade and catering began to be improved, and the range of available foods gradually expanded.

For many people from poorer backgrounds, the first period in their lives when adequate food was available to satisfy their hunger, was in the 1960s. Food prices were kept under control. School and work meals were cheap, and dairy bars (selling bakery and dairy products), buffets, self-service restaurants, cafeterias, confectioneries and pubs, were easily accessible even on an average salary.

Comparative statistics on per capita annual consumption of various food items reveal that the amount of food consumed increased significantly from decade to decade, indicating a general consolidation of living standards. In the three decades between 1960 and 1990, per capita annual consumption of meat, fats, sugar, milk and dairy products grew by one and a half times, while eggs were consumed two and

a half times more than previously.¹⁰ At the same time, it should also be noted that high calorie intake, combined with the transformation of lifestyles involving reduced physical labour, led to obesity becoming almost an epidemic in the Hungarian population, resulting in a high rate of cardiovascular mortality.

With the completion of the collectivisation process (with the radical diminution of private farming and the centralising of agricultural production) and the improvement of the food-supply network, self-sufficiency decreased, though it did not disappear entirely (in terms of vegetables, fruit, and meat produced in rural households). At the same time, albeit varying by region and settlement type, the proportion of food purchased in food stores increased even among the rural population.

In the socialist society, with the aforementioned goal of full employment, the high level of population mobilisation amid socialist industrialisation and urbanisation, and the expansion of educational opportunities, workplaces and educational institutions had to provide meals for their employees and students. Large numbers of people, both children and adults, began eating in canteens and buffets.¹¹ Families increasingly relied on public catering during weekdays rather than on home-cooking. In many households, especially in cities, hot meals were cooked at home on weekends.

With the high proportion of female employment, the time available for household chores decreased, which partly pushed labour- and time-intensive domestic processes into the background. Moreover, women operating under the burden of slowly-changing traditional gender roles, had to balance their responsibilities with considerable self-exploitation, both in the workplace and within the still conservative, male-centred family structure.

So, altogether, there was a shift in food-consumption patterns towards store-bought goods and reliance on public catering. In both cities and villages, the former pattern

10 However, cereals and potatoes were consumed about a fifth to a third less by 1990, again a telling sign of changing eating habits. Consumption peaked in the second half of the 1980s, then declined in the mid-1990s due to price increases and market transition, as well as shifts in consumption patterns following the 1990s regime change. See analysis of statistics in: Valuch, Tibor, 'Táplálkozás, étkezési és étrendi szokások' ('Nutrition, eating habits and dietary patterns'), in Valuch, Tibor, *Magyarország társadalomtörténete a 20. század második felében* ('Social history of Hungary in the second half of 20th century') (Budapest: Osiris, 2001), 322.

11 It is worth mentioning here that until the mid-1960s, kindergartens, schools, and factories, operated their own kitchens with dedicated kitchen staff. After this period, however, the state started to centralise the system and established large-scale regional public-catering firms with wide territorial coverage. This led to further uniformity of the much-criticised canteen food offer.

of everyday and festive meals was undergoing transformation, and a significant standardisation of home-cooked meals occurred during this period.

From the second half of the 1960s and throughout the 1970s, a wave of new food-industry products appeared, including an increasingly-diverse range of cheeses, dairy products, processed meats, and baked goods. Even in villages, store-bought bread became the norm, practically eliminating homemade bread. (In small settlements without stores, bread and other basic groceries were delivered at least twice a week by mobile shops.)

With the growth of the canning industry, preserved vegetables, fruit, meat products, and ready-made meals became commonplace in households. From the 1970s, the use of oil and margarine-spread, started replacing lard and butter. Mention must also be made of the growth of pleasure foods and luxury items – the expanding selection of sweets, soft drinks, coffee and distilled spirits. The Hungarian food industry established its own sought-after branded products in chocolates and soft drinks.¹² (The list would be too long to detail here, year by year, which products were novelties and became hits of the era, many of which would be banished today from health-conscious diets.) Ice cream flavours also diversified, and by the 1970s, parfait and ice pops had appeared. (These are flavour-memories that children of the time, still today, nostalgically recall.)¹³ The increase in carbohydrate intake, the indulgence in sweets, and the rise in soft-drinks consumption, were all partly prestige consumption in character, as a form of compensation for the previous lean era.¹⁴

Despite this development of food retail, the choice and quality of products was, nevertheless, limited. Housewives had a vested interest in maintaining jovial relationships with shop managers or the butcher, earning their favour in order to access better-quality goods or scarce items, from under the counter. This was especially true for imported southern fruits. There were periods when, apart from

12 Although originally a Russian invention, its Hungarian version, the chocolate-covered cottage-cheese stick called *Túró Rudi*, remains successful to this day, and has even made it onto the list of Hungarikums. Its dotted packaging cleverly capitalised on the popularity of a fundamental children's literary work of the era, the 'Pöttös Panni' ('Polka-Dot Panni') books.

13 For example, consider the *Márka Meggy* ('sour cherry') soft-drink brand, the quince juice from the Kecskemét Canning Factory, or the grape-based *Traubisoda*, which was originally produced under an Austrian licence. Some soft drinks, as well as certain products from the Győr Biscuit Factory, or from the now closed-down Szerencs Chocolate Factory, have recently been cleverly reintroduced into production through savvy marketing strategies.

14 The same logic of a compensational pattern can be found, in general, in the consumption of junk food by the poorest, and was also observed in the socialist-bloc countries after the regime-change in the 1990s.

lower-quality and less desirable Cuban oranges, other varieties of oranges were scarcely available. And before Christmas, securing even a single bunch of bananas was considered a great triumph.

The introduction and the spread of refrigerators and later, from the 1980s onwards, of freezers¹⁵ in households, brought a significant transformation in kitchen technology and food storage: think, for example, of the way garden produce, and home-slaughtered meat such as pork or poultry, were processed. Accordingly, a widening selection of frozen raw products and Mirelite ready meals appeared in the grocery store offer. Similarly, in the second half of 1970s and throughout the 1980s, mechanised kitchen appliances appeared, such as electric mixers, grinders, food processors, juicers, pressure cookers, toasters, sandwich makers, and coffee machines. Some of these were domestically produced, but most were socialist imports, primarily from East Germany and the Soviet Union. The use of these appliances was further encouraged by the era's propaganda, which promoted the 'required' image of the modern Hungarian socialist family and household. Advertisements and media-messaging reinforced the idea that these devices symbolised progress and convenience in everyday life.

Here we should note that with the expansion of domestic travel opportunities and the growing network of campgrounds,¹⁶ new innovations also emerged for outdoor picnickers and campers.

It is worth mentioning briefly that a broader transformation in food packaging also occurred. Back in the 1960s, paper, cardboard, greaseproof paper, cellophane, and tinfoil were used in food packaging, while beverages and dairy products came in returnable glass bottles. (Many people would go to the dairy shop with their own enamelled metal milk jugs to fetch fresh milk, which then had to be boiled at home.) Everyone used their own baskets, or crocheted, sewn shopping bags for groceries. From the 1970s onwards, plastic packaging began spreading rapidly, with Tetra-Pak cartons appearing in the 1980s. (Parallel to this process was the development of

15 Kisbán, Eszter, 'Táplálkozás-kultúra' ('Food Culture'), in Iván Balassa, ed., *Magyar Néprajz IV. Életmód* ('Hungarian Ethnography, IV. Life Style') (Budapest: MTA Néprajzi Kutatóintézet, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1997), 437.

16 The development of the Lake Balaton area, especially the southern shore, gained momentum around 1960. Camp-grounds, hotels, and vacation houses for employees, were developed. The modernisation of existing taverns and restaurants, along with the establishment of seasonal beach buffets, camping bistros, ice-cream stands, self-service eateries, and wine bars, were carried out to accommodate summer tourism.

techniques for the long-term preservation of milk.) This era saw the explosive rise of plastic advertising bags.¹⁷

Nevertheless, for the majority of the population, the average standard of living was converging, as lifestyles and incomes consolidated. (It should also be noted that, for ideological reasons, both the income of and social esteem for the intelligentsia, were withheld by the system, in favour of the industrial workers.) The average socialist citizen could afford to eat plentifully. Even though life was lived within a firmly-defined, limited, and controlled framework of opportunities, Sunday meals – complete with meat soup (bouillon), breaded cutlets (*Wiener-schnitzel*) with French fries and cucumber salad, and some sort of pastry – never failed to appear on the table.¹⁸

However, marginalised and impoverished social groups and related malnutrition were undeniably present in socialist Hungary. (The school canteen¹⁹ pricing-by-income-category and the school milk campaign, were intended to address this situation.) These groups included unskilled industrial labourers, residents of economically-depressed small villages, and the isolated farmsteads (*tanya*) of the Great Plain region. The Roma population also faced systemic disadvantages, while those accused of ‘labour evasion’ were criminalised – their very existence was interpreted as resistance, which contradicted the policy of the instrumental system

17 These plastic bags were not just used for shopping, as bags with a more attractive advertising graphic or colour, were also carried on the street as a kind of fashion accessory – paired with everyday outfits – until they wore out.

18 See Valuch, Tibor, Iván, “‘We ate, we drank, we filled our stomachs’: nutrition, eating, and dietary habits’, in Valuch, Tibor, *Everyday life under communism and after: lifestyle and consumption in Hungary, 1945–2000*, (Budapest, New York: Central European University Press, 2021), 415–468.

19 The recent and current state of school catering was examined in a multi-year, large-scale research project, led by Anikó Bádi. This interdisciplinary study, not only drew upon ethnographical expertise, but also involved specialists from public institutions dealing with public catering and public health, in the cross-institutional research team. See: Bádi, Anikó, ‘School Meals on the Menu. Studies on the Practices of Children’s Catering’, *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* 68/1 (2023), 1–10; Bádi, Anikó, ‘Opportunities for Interdisciplinary Research on School Catering’, *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* 68/1 (2023), 91–123; Husz, Ildikó, ‘The Social Embeddedness of School-Holiday Meals for Children Based on Discourses of Need and Deservingness’, *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* 68/1 (2023), 125–142; Kelemen, Katalin, ‘The “School Meals Market” in Hungary – Typical Characteristics of Demand and Supply’, *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* 68/1 (2023), 143–159; Juhász, Katalin, ‘Urban and Rural Attitudes toward School Food’, *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* 68/1 (2023), 161–178; Csajbókne Csobod, Éva and Katalin Tátrai-Németh, ‘The Role of Dietitian and Catering Manager in Public Catering and Opportunities for Training in Hungary’, *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* 68/1 (2023), 191–206; Kiss, Anna, and Laura Pfeiffer, et. al., ‘How Do Food Service Managers Look at School Catering? A Qualitative Content Analysis of a Roundtable Discussion on School Meals Provision’, *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* 68/1 (2023), 207–227.

of full employment. These intertwined issues sparked major debates about the most controversial socio-political problems of the period.

In stark contrast, on the other side, stood the privileged and rewarded group of cadres loyal to the party, the *apparatchik* in top positions. Their privileges included, for example, access to Western goods in the so-called 'diplomatic stores' run by the foreign trade company *Konzumturiszt*, which were exclusively available to those with special permits. (In a workplace or factory, it was completely normal for members of the top brass – the director, party secretary, and the trade union leader, to start the day with cognac, coffee, and cigarettes.)

Smoking, without any regard for children or non-smokers, was completely commonplace. In family homes, at gatherings with friends, in workplaces, restaurants, trains, and even in university lecture halls, the air was thick with smoke. During the transition period around the turn of 1980s and 1990s, efforts to curb smoking in public areas encountered significant challenges due to smokers' deeply-entrenched habits and feelings of resentment.

THE NATIONALISATION OF THE SERVICE SECTOR

In the late 1940s, during the nationalisation period, the state confiscated businesses from countless family-run enterprises – small eateries, restaurants, and pastry shops.²⁰ Many renowned chefs and confectioners, whose dynasties had worked in the hospitality industry for generations, were forced to surrender their businesses to the state and to become state employees. Only a few establishments retained their former names after the nationalisation period – when they were then run by the state – or could revive them during the 1980s or after the regime-change, such as e.g., Gundel (since 1894), Kugler (since 1847 in Pest), Gerbeaud (taking over the shop from Kugler in 1884), Augustt (since 1870), Hauer (since 1890), Ruszwurm

²⁰ During the nationalisations, in December 1949, even small businesses with more than 10 employees were nationalised, and many former confectioneries became the property of the giant state-owned Bufe National Company, from 1 January 1950. Among its primary tasks, the company was providing catering services for workers at the emerging industrial cities. It operated buffet networks for factories, theatres, sports facilities, and spas, as well as mobile food-stands for large parades (such as 1 May Parade), and outdoor events. From 1953 onwards, numerous restaurants (including at the airport) came under the management of the Restaurant and Buffet Company, which, itself, was overseen by the Representative Catering Directorate of the Interior Ministry.



Fig. 5. Foodstore, Budapest, 1958. (Photo donor: Gábor Szabó, Fortepan, photo ID 174775, 1958)



Fig. 6. Emke espresso and buffet, Budapest, 1961. (Photo donor: Sándor Bauer, Fortepan, photo ID 112851, 1961)



Fig. 7. Gundel Restaurant, Budapest, 1957. (Photo donor: Sándor Bauer, Fortepan, photo ID 113467, 1957)

(since 1827), and Daubner (since 1901).²¹ Coffee houses, seen as gathering places for the bourgeois, critically-minded intelligentsia, and as breeding grounds for ‘capitalist reactionism’, were deemed undesirable and shut down. Most of the nationalised, once-prestigious hotels and restaurants stagnated, their standards sharply declining. A good number of gastronomic professionals had left the country, leading to a serious dilution of knowledge and the loss of creative recipe variations.²²

In the aftermath of the suppression of the 1956 revolution, the state began developing the commercial retail network and also the hospitality industry, as part of a new policy to consolidate the way of life in Hungary, in order to regain loyalty to the regime. In the capital and larger cities, several new, large grocery stores, pastry shops, and buffets, were opened. The media prominently displayed their abundant merchandise, contrasting it with the previous era of scarcity – a clear propaganda tool.

As part of the booming housing construction programme, affordable restaurants and confectionaries (which were also live-music entertainment venues) sprang up in newly-built housing estates and at popular socialist holiday resorts. (These modernist buildings, constructed under the auspices of the state building-industry, featured interior designs reflecting contemporary trends.) Urban areas saw a rise in breakfast spots (so-called ‘milk bars’), self-service canteens, and transport-linked catering outlets, such as railway-station restaurants and buffets. The *Útasellátó Vállalat* (‘Passenger Catering Company’) operated the dining cars on trains as well as having mobile vendors moving through the carriages.

The political leadership realised – both for diplomatic reasons and to satisfy their own representational needs – that they required establishments offering both exclusivity and luxury. Alongside the development of a hospitality network accessible to ordinary citizens, iconic upscale venues from the bourgeois era, were revived or repolished. These included legendary names like Gundel, Gerbeaud (renamed Vörösmarty), Gresham, Abbázia, Emke, Savoy, the Fisherman’s Bastion Restaurant, the Grand Hotel and Casino on Margaret Island, the Astoria and Múzeum café, the members-only Fészek Művészkлуб (‘Nest Artists’ Club) catering to the cultural elite,

21 The founding father, Béla Daubner, was incarcerated under socialism for 11 years, out of which 2.5 were spent in prison under the Kádár’s regime.

22 For more, on the nationalisation of the hospitality sector, see: Szigeti, Andor, ‘A vendéglátás története’ (‘The history of hospitality’), in András Rubovszky, Andor Szigeti, and Miklós Walkó, *A magyar vendéglátás és turizmus újkori története* (‘The modern history of Hungarian hospitality and tourism’) (Agrár Szaktudás Könyvtár) (Budapest: Szaktudás Kiadó Ház, 2009), 15–199.



*Fig. 8. Delegation of the Republic of India at the Palotagyöngye Restaurant, Budapest, 1958.
(Photo donor: György Sándor, Fortepan, photo ID 117168, FSZEK Budapest Gyűjtemény,
1958)*

the rebranded Vörös Csillag ('Red Star') restaurant in the historic hotel on Liberty Hill, and the exclusive *Különlegesség Cukrászda* ('Speciality Patisserie') on Népköztársaság Avenue, among others.

In these restaurants, Gypsy bands playing traditional Hungarian art music continued to be a living hallmark of 'Hungarian-style' hospitality. Meanwhile, in the new patisseries and garden venues, a socialist-approved, toned-down melodic variations of the era's light music repertoire was featured, accompanied by solo piano or estrada band. (Many jazz musicians, previously condemned in the 1950s as symbols of 'imperialist influence', had left the country after 1956.)

DIPLOMACY ON A PLATE: HUNGARIAN CUISINE AT THE 1958 BRUSSELS WORLD'S FAIR

The participation of Hungarian artists and athletes, sent to the Moscow (1957), Vienna (1959), and Helsinki (1962) World Festival of Youth and Students,²³ after the 1956 reprisals, held diplomatic importance for the country's opening-up to foreign countries. (This was part of the soft diplomacy efforts in the late 1950s and early 1960s, where top artists and athletes were given opportunities to tour Western countries or to attend international competitions.) Similarly, the party leadership attributed great importance to Hungary's presence at the 1958 Brussels World's Fair, viewing it as another crucial platform for international engagement. (After the Second World War, Brussels was the first world exhibition to be reorganised.)

It is worth mentioning here that ever since the success of the (previously mentioned) Hungarian *csárda* (tavern) from the Great Plain at the 1873 Vienna World's Fair, Hungary placed great emphasis on its gastronomic presence at every subsequent world exhibition, showcased in architecturally-prominent pavilions. The international presentation of Hungarian hospitality was not only about serving iconic Hungarian dishes, but also about creating a folk-inspired atmosphere, complete with live Gypsy music. Even during the socialist era, Hungarian catering never fully broke free from the clichéd image of the Great Plain-style *csárda*, with its cauldron-cooked goulash and *pörkölt* (stew), and rustic charm.

²³ The youth festivals organised by the anti-imperialist World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY) and the International Union of Students, under Soviet guidance, were important ideological propaganda tools of the left-wing 'peace alliance' during the Cold War.

The Hungarian pavilion's presence at the 1958 Brussels World's Fair carried profound political significance – it represented a crucial opportunity to rehabilitate the country's battered international image. Recognising this, the communist leadership mobilised all available resources to exploit the exposition's propaganda potential to its fullest.²⁴ The aim was to showcase Hungary as a progressive and culturally-vibrant socialist state. The programme proposal recommended a light, witty style, elegance, and the creation of a cheerful, direct atmosphere, in order to dispel any criticisms that socialism was monotonous and drab.²⁵ (The approach was rather cynical, when, in reality, summary courts were in operation, and imprisonments and executions were commonplace.) The Hungarian pavilion's modernist, aluminium-clad building, its interior design, and art exhibition highlighting Csontváry's oeuvre, no longer conceived of the spirit of the ideologically-imposed socialist realism at home. Nor did the display of Hungarian products reflect the harsh realities of communism's toughest scarcity period. The greatest success of the Hungarian participation was the 500-seat restaurant with a terrace and Hungarian décor, the initial inspiration for which was the idea that its revenue could cover the pavilion's construction costs. Alongside the head-manager of the restaurant – the well-recognised culinary expert József Venesz – the kitchen was run by the similarly renowned master chefs Emil Túrós and József Rákóczi. The culinary offerings became a centrepiece of a soft power campaign, transforming traditional dishes into edible diplomacy. (Waitstaff received intensive training in Western etiquette and had language skills.) The restaurant featured live Gypsy music,²⁶ introduced international audiences to quintessential national dishes such as goulash, fish-soup, chicken paprikash with dumplings, Balaton pike-perch, strudel, and more, along with wine from Tokaj. János Rákóczi invented the *Rákóczi túrós* (a type of cheesecake) for the occasion. Western media raved about the exotic paprika-laced flavours of the most vibrant cuisine behind the Iron Curtain.

The Hungarian restaurant won the Grand Prix, and, as the icing on the cake, even IBUSZ, the state's 'Tourism Procurement Travel and Transport Company, took home a gold medal. Architect, Lajos Gáboros, not only won the Grand Prix but was

24 In fact, it never occurred to the Belgian organisers to boycott Russians or Hungarians because of the Russian armed invasion suppressing the revolution.

25 György Aczél, the later powerful minister of culture-policy of the Kádár era, oversaw the preparations in his role as deputy minister. The programme-drafting was entrusted to Iván Boldizsár, a sophisticated-cultured writer and editor-in-chief of a main media organ of the 1950s, who had extensive experience in the French art world and who always had a good sense of political winds.

26 The music was provided by the folk orchestra of Sándor Lakatos.



Fig. 9. The Olympia restaurant in the 15,000-person housing estate for uranium miners in Pécs, modelled on the Hungarian restaurant of the Brussels World Exhibition, built in 1960. (Photo donor: VÁTI, Fortepan, photo ID 31226, 1960)

also knighted in the Belgian Order of the Crown.²⁷ (His architecture foreshadowed the modernist style in which a series of new public venues would be constructed in Hungary from the 1960s onward.) Thus, the desired success was complete. The Brussels World's Fair significantly boosted the global promotion of Hungarian cuisine. The state strategically leveraged this recognition, exporting Hungarian food products, and even establishing state-run 'Hungarian restaurants' in Western cities during the 1960s, as part of its soft power efforts.²⁸

After 1958, the leadership recognised the previously-neglected potential of tourism to develop into a fully-fledged economic sector. (Traditionally, tourism in Hungary had been concentrated in Budapest and around Lake Balaton, following inter-war trends.) As a result, the number of guest nights began to rise, and between 1960 and 1964, the number of foreign visitors surged fivefold, reaching 1.3 million in 1964, with 1 in 5 tourists hailing from non-socialist states.²⁹

MASTER CHEFS OF THE SOCIALIST ERA AND THE LEGACY OF BOURGEOIS CUISINE

The Venesz controversy: the culinary tradition versus standardisation

It is worth taking a closer look at the pivotal yet controversial figure of József Venesz (1912–1978), whose remarkable career left an indelible mark on the Hungarian gastronomy of the era. In the 1930s, he served as head chef at Budapest's most prestigious venues – the New York Café and the restaurants of the Kárpátia, Palatinus, and Hungária hotels – before becoming executive chef in Milan and Abbazia (Opatija, Croatia) from 1937 onwards. After returning home following the Second World War, he worked at the Savoy Café (Budapest) but soon found himself drawn into the political sphere and became a member of the Communist Party.

27 See details in: Róka, Enikő, 'Az 1958-as brüsszeli világkiállítás magyar pavilonja' ('The Hungarian Pavilion at the 1958 World Expo in Brussels'), in Zoltán Fehérvári, Virág Hajdú, and Endre Prakfalvi, eds., *Pavilon építészet a 19–20. században a Magyar Építészeti Múzeum gyűjteményéből* ('Pavilion architecture in the 19th–20th centuries from the collection of the Hungarian Museum of Architecture') (Budapest: OMvH Magyar Építészeti Múzeum, 2001), 169–172.

28 From 1959 to 1962, József Venesz was the head of the Department of the KONZUMEX Foreign Trade Company, where he organised and supervised the Hungarian restaurants established abroad. These 'friendship' restaurants staffed by party-vetted chefs, became hubs for cultural outreach.

29 Tischler, János, 'Az Onódy-ügy, 1964' ('The Onódy case, 1964'), *Beszélő* 9/2 (2004), <<http://beszelo.c3.hu/cikkek/az-onody-ugy-1964#2004-f02-14>> from 35 accessed 2.4.2025.

From 1948 to 1960, during Hungary's most austere period, he served as chef for the Hungarian Olympic team, having earned a gold diploma at the 1948 Brussels World Food Exhibition. Beginning in 1949, Vesz held leadership positions in Hungary's rapidly-changing state-hospitality sector, including the National Food Company, Budapest Catering Trust, and the Representative Catering Directorate, before achieving his crowning triumph at the 1958 Brussels World's Fair. From this point onwards, his influence became both uninterrupted and decisive. Together with Emil Turós (his co-chef in Brussels), he co-authored the *Unified Catering Cookbook and Kitchen Technology Regulations*, which was codified into law in 1961. Its instructions became mandatory for decades, standardising both commercial and institutional kitchens, while accounting for the era's limited ingredient availability and sociopolitical priorities – such as the stated goal of expanding catering services for agricultural co-operative and industrial workers. The planned economy and austerity measures of the early socialist period are clearly manifested in the cookbook's ingredient measurements, and in the simplified recipes that conformed to 'socialist morality'. It substituted specialty ingredients and reduced meat portions, while increasing calorie-dense side dishes, and also Hungarianised elitist-sounding foreign dish names.

However, the culinary revival of recent decades and the critiques from food-bloggers' circles have led to a cascade of swift, damning judgments that seek to topple Vesz's legacy. Critics from the fine-dining, reform- and eco-cuisine movements particularly condemn his excessive use of flour, non-seasonal recipes and reliance on Hungarian canned goods. They also target his paprika-and-tomato sauce combinations and his adherence to the 'Holy Trinity' of onion, lard and paprika powder, along with the generous use of sour cream. As a critic put it in her 2013 article: Vesz's approach foregrounded 'peasant romanticism and a cheerful-barracks aesthetic' – a characterisation that has become a topos in the debate on his complex culinary heritage.³⁰ Altogether, he is blamed for the perceived decline in socialist-era dining standards without proper consideration of the historical context in which he operated.

Yet, upon closer examination, we must recognise that the generation of experts who created these regulations emerged from the high-standard, Western-oriented Hungarian hospitality industry of the inter-war period, bringing with them immense

30 Melocco, Anna, 'Kipróbáltuk a nemzet receptjeit, és kétségbeestünk' ('We Tried the Nation's Recipes and Were Horrified') (2013) <<https://www.origo.hu/tafelspicc/2013/03/venesz-jozsef-magyaros-konyha-konyvkritika-receptekkel>> accessed 28.3.2025.

international professional experience. Contrary to contemporary criticisms, we owe it to them that the communist leadership did not completely discard – as ‘bourgeois remnants’ – the culinary refinement inherited from the previous era. The imprint of the 1964 reissue of the above *Regulations* still bore the names of the great chefs of the 1930s – Emil Turós of the Bristol Hotel, János Rákóczi of the Gellért Hotel, László Szinder of the Royal Hotel, and Oszkár Lontai from the Danube-side hotel row (who later retired as manager of a socialist canning factory). During the 1960s, more discerning housewives, who kept Venesz’s ‘Hungarian Cuisine’ cookbook³¹ as their ‘bible’ on the shelf, could read in the ‘Introduction’ how Venesz’s culinary philosophy referenced the great French authority, the legendary innovator of haute cuisine, August Escoffier (1846–1935). Venesz’s recipes, ranging from appetisers through fish and game dishes to desserts, provide varied insights into a more sophisticated middle-class cuisine, still featuring numerous ingredients that were hardly easily obtainable at the time. The festive menus, photographs of plating, and tables set in various styles with fine chinaware, all testify to high standards. Actually, the cookbook seems rather to suggest, how these professionals navigated between preserving standards and adapting to impossible constraints. Several stories reveal how this generation of chefs, despite economic hardships, oppressive centralisation, ideological pressure, and authoritarian political control, struggled to salvage some intellectual independence, civic bearing, self-dignity, and traditions, within socialism’s constricting framework.³² (Ultimately, it should also be added, that eagerness in catering for luxury consumption is inherently linked to the elite in any political system and remains a part of hospitality professionalism.) With a more nuanced consideration, their work represents not culinary decline per se, but rather the resilience of professional traditions under circumstances that would have destroyed crafts with lesser legacy- and identity-strengths. We should, perhaps, in this context, consider the reflection written by Venesz’s grandson: ‘Instead of texts creating public enemy images about “Venezsizm”, we should rather discuss historical objectives, possibilities, and why original intentions became distorted over time ...’³³

The vehement criticism of Venesz by the reform-centred younger generations, has also swept aside the reputations of several established culinary personalities from

31 It was first published in 1958 and later had multiple editions. Venesz’s *Hungarian Culinary Art* was also published in four languages for the international market in 1958.

32 Perhaps, it was not altogether accidental, that after his 1975 retirement, Venesz and Turós received the *Golden Spoon Award* from the American culinary magazine Chef.

33 Mélyi, József, ‘Javított kiadás előtt. Venesz nagyapám élete és utókora’ (‘Revised edition. The Life and Legacy of My Grandfather Venesz’), Magyar Narancs 2013, 16 June <<https://magyarnarancs.hu/belpol/javított-kiadás-előtt-84759>> accessed 28.3.2025.

the late Kádár-era and the post-regime-change decade. Károly Unger (1939–2011), a master chef and culinary writer, came from a multi-generational family of restaurant owners, whose famous tavern in Óbuda was nationalised in the early 1950s. Despite this, he chose the path of a chef, learning from great predecessors and climbing the ranks in Hungary's socialist hospitality industry.³⁴ As President of the Hungarian National Gastronomic Association, he organised national culinary competitions, established the Venesz József Memorial Award, and always saw it as his mission to preserve the traditions of Hungarian cuisine. He responded to the escalating debates around Hungarian gastronomy in several interviews, which included this notable quote: 'I know we must move with the times, eat in a more modern way, care for our health, and so on. But our classic dishes – our national treasures, which belong in the world's culinary heritage – should remain untouched. This is our legacy. These dishes should be prepared in the same way, everywhere, without exception.'³⁵

The controversy reached its peak on the opposing side with the 'Culinary Charter' manifesto.³⁶ The well-intentioned manifesto – the closing line of which declared: 'Our dining culture is a rhinoceros in need of rescue. Let us adopt it!' – was signed by around 110 gastronomy professionals, winemakers, and leading intellectuals.

AN EMBLEMATIC EFFORT TO UPHOLD QUALITY – THE HONEY BEAR BUFFET AND THE RISE AND FALL OF ITS LEADERS

The *Mézes Mackó* ('Honey Bear') buffet, that opened on Budapest's Kígyó Street in 1955, quickly established itself as the most sophisticated cold buffet of socialist

34 Between 1976 and 1985, working within the framework of the Pannónia Hotel and Restaurant Company, he served as head chef in hotels across more than 20 countries – primarily in Europe, the Middle East, and the Far East. In 1986, he succeeded Egon Lontai as President of the Hungarian Chefs' and Pastry Chefs' Association, holding the position for four terms until 2002. In 1996, his team brought home 14 gold medals from the Berlin Culinary Olympics. In 1997, he founded the Hungarian National Gastronomic Association, and he was a member of the Swedish, Japanese, and German Chefs' Associations. He also became a lifelong member of the World Association of Chefs' Societies, an honour granted to only 100 individuals, with new members admitted only upon the passing of existing ones.

35 Hargitai, György, 'Unger Károly a Magyar Nemzeti Gasztronómiai Szövetség alapítója' ('Károly Unger: Founder of the Hungarian National Gastronomic Association') <<https://receptletoltes.hu/unger-karoly-a-magyar-nemzeti-gasztronomiai-szovetseg-alapitoja/>> accessed 20.3.2025.

36 It was published on 9 June 2007, by the rival organisation, the Hungarian Gastronomic Association (MGE), in the *Magyar Nemzet* magazine's gastronomy column, run by Tamás B. Molnár and Dóra Bittera. <<https://www.buvosszakacs.com/kulinaris-charta/>> accessed 29.3.2025.



Fig. 10. To celebrate the third anniversary of the 'Honey Bear' Buffet, they welcomed the zoo's bear as a guest. The store manager, Géza Tódor, is in the front of the photo. Budapest, 1958. (Photo donor: Sándor Bauer, Fortepan, photo ID 127340, 1958)

Hungary. It offered an exceptional French-inspired selection of delicacies, that redefined public dining standards, with its elegant presentation and refined flavours. This culinary gem served an impressive array of dishes, including mayonnaise-based salads, devilled eggs, horseradish ham rolls, aspic meat preparations, fish terrines, Swedish-style mushroom salad, caviar, fresh pastries, desserts, and refreshing drinks, while boasting about what was widely considered to be the best cream coffee in Budapest at the time.

The premises in which it was opened was formerly Géza Tódor's delicatessen shop, which had been nationalised. The story began when the powerful and gourmet-loving Minister of Culture, Gyula Ortutay, sought out Géza Tódor – who was then working as a cook in a suburban barracks canteen – with a mission to create something special. Tódor rose to the challenge, vowing to create something 'Budapest had never before seen'.³⁷ He transformed the space into a lavishly-elegant venue adorned with mirrors and marble, personally selecting a staff that included a chef who would later win an Oscar, demonstrating the exceptional standards he demanded.

Tódor proved equally innovative in his marketing approach, borrowing a tame bear from the zoo which he dressed in a white apron and stationed behind the counter, while personally greeting well-dressed passers-by and to invite them inside. The unique combination of quality, and the showmanship of the ever-present boss, quickly made Mézes Mackó a chic place to be, attracting party elites, artists and bureaucrats, while also remaining accessible to ordinary citizens looking for quality food in the city centre. The concept proved so successful that multiple branches opened across Budapest, all operating under state ownership, as part of the National Restaurant and Buffet Company led by Onódy Lajos (1920–1996) – a strategically important position, especially in post-1956 Hungary, where dining establishments served as listening posts for the regime.³⁸ Among the attractive-looking waitresses,

37 See the interview with Tódor, by Boglárka Kovács (2001): Kovács, Boglárka, 'Egy medve nem csinál nyarat' ('One bear does not make a summer'), *Népszabadság* 59 (Nov. 17, 2001), 27.

38 Onódy was the head of the company, overseen by the Representative Catering Directorate of the Interior Ministry, from its establishment in 1950 (see also footnote 20). Over time, the enterprise grew into one of Hungary's largest catering companies with a nationwide network, boasting 380 establishments of varying sizes. The company under Onódy introduced, for example, street soda carts, imported Italian Caggia machines for cream coffee, launched soft-serve ice cream machines, smoothie drinks and music jukeboxes, to Hungary. To better illustrate the complexities of the era, it is worth noting that this paradoxical individual (Onódy) had been sentenced to die in a Gestapo prison during the war and was awarded the Righteous Among the Nations honour by Yad Vashem in 1995. Even in his communist leadership position, he quietly aided numerous socially-ostracised

there was always someone, like Teca the coffee-maker in Snake Street, whose job it was to report back to the regime.

The buffet's prestige reached such heights that it hosted Khrushchev during his Hungarian visit in 1955. And later, when Mézes Mackó was invited, as a reward, to the USSR, they impressed the Soviet leader and Moscow with their culinary offerings. However, the political winds shifted dramatically when Khrushchev fell from power in 1964, interestingly taking Mézes Mackó's management down with him, through fabricated charges.³⁹ Onódy Lajos had stood in someone's way and was arrested on charges of conspiracy, misappropriation, abuse of office, fraud, and bribery. There were also salacious rumours of orgies with actresses. Tódor was also arrested and got out of prison only in 1971. Despite these setbacks, the buffet continued to operate uninterrupted until the early 1990s when it finally succumbed to the new capitalist era. It left behind a legacy of unmatched cold-buffet cuisine that Hungary has yet to replicate, serving as both a testament to socialist-era gourmet culture and as a cautionary tale about the intersection of politics and gastronomy.

BRIDGING PRE-WAR AND SOCIALIST HOME ECONOMICS

Alongside the above-outlined portraits of male experts, it is worth highlighting the impactful legacy of a distinguished female professional who stood out primarily because of her educational and specialist literary work. Ilona Horváth (1906–1969), of Transylvanian origin, first trained as a primary-school teacher before specialising in home-economics instruction, while also serving as a church community sister. During World War II, she relocated to Budapest, and in 1945 was appointed Director of the Törökszentmiklós Housekeeping Middle School. From 1952 until her retirement, she served as Director of a Budapest girls' boarding school, while

contemporaries by providing them with employment. 'The secret to Onódy's success lay in the fact that from the very beginning, wherever possible, he entrusted the management of both existing and newly-established canteens, buffets, and restaurants, to former owners officially classified as "declassified elements" – highly regarded professionals who were true experts in their field. Simultaneously, the most skilled masters, who had been sidelined during the Rákosi era due to political unreliability, found employment in the company's central pastry workshop and cold kitchen that supplied Budapest. This unconventional approach was made possible primarily by Onódy's impeccable working-class movement credentials, which provided him with the necessary political protection.' (Information about Onódy and the quote is from: Tischler 2004 – see note 29 above. János Tischler's historical case-study draws on archival sources, court documents and interviews.).

39 'The uncertainty that arose after Khrushchev's fall, raised the question of how János Kádár could overcome the shakiness of his position, which his opponents in the upper echelons of the party sought to exploit.' (Tischler, 'Az Onódy-ügy, 1964' – see note 29 above.)

continuing to teach home economics. Her cookery book, an enduring classic (with over 20 editions), was first published in 1955 by the Democratic Alliance of Hungarian Women. (From 1956 onwards, significantly-expanded editions appeared.) This work, subtly preserving pre-war culinary traditions, became one of post-war Hungary's most influential domestic manuals.

The 7th edition, published in 1973, was supplemented and revised by Angéla F. Nagy. This updated version of Ilona Horváth's cookbook by Angéla F. Nagy, is still considered the essential guide for both novice and advanced housewives alike. Beyond its excellent recipes, this beloved manual also shares technical kitchen fundamentals and rational household management tips in an accessible and enjoyable style. (Notably, Angéla F. Nagy was the first wife of famed writer István Örkény.)

Ilona Horváth's personal example also sheds light on the perseverance of middle-class influences under socialism – through the process of standardisation of cooking skills as a result of the successful spread of the ideal of 'good bourgeois cooking' through several channels, including the pre-war education of women in domestic science (discussed at the beginning of this paper).

Here it must be mentioned that handwritten pre-war recipe notebooks – a distinctive form of female heritage – carefully preserved by mothers and grandmothers in declassed middle-class households, were treasured family heirlooms. Those special flavours – pâtés, pastries, sweet delicacies, homemade Christmas fondant candy, liqueurs or spiced vermouth – which could thus grace the holiday table, brought unique colour to family celebrations, and became integral parts of distinctive family traditions. These dishes served as vessels of memory, a tool for family remembrance and generational bonding through taste and ritual. This quiet culinary resistance as a form of civil resilience could lift families for a day above the uniform drabness of everyday life in socialism.

LIBERALISATION OF TRAVEL, ALLURE OF NEW FLAVOURS, AND THE DIVERSIFICATION OF PALATES

Another aspect of the late Kádár era, one that gradually left its mark on individual eating habits, and which should also be elucidated, is travel. In the 1970s and 1980s, Hungarian citizens were given more and more – albeit still limited – opportunities

for international travel. At first, they were allowed to travel within the socialist bloc, then to the West, initially on an organised (i.e. controlled) basis or by special invitation, and later as individual tourists. Western travel, initially allowed only once every three years, was later increased to once a year, with strict restrictions on convertible currency exchange. (For many, it was a game of hide-and-seek to smuggle currency through the strict border controls.)

Before the 1970s, only high-career athletes, artists, scientists, and loyal cadres, were allowed more opportunities for official travel to the West, but still under strict supervision. The risk of getting caught did not stop many of these from smuggling Western luxury goods into the country on their return – often in quantities large enough for sale under the table, be it chewing gum, Swiss chocolate, nylon stockings, or Swiss watches.

By the mid-1980s, economic shortages within the Eastern Bloc led to a boom in shopping tourism. While Poles, Serbs and others came to Hungary to avail of street-vending in the semi-legal 'Comecon Market, Hungarian shoppers eagerly headed West. Vienna's Mariahilfer Strasse became a prime destination for them, its stores crowded with Hungarians hauling back refrigerators, hi-fi systems and other electronic gadgets, packing their socialist-era cars (Zsigulis, Trabants, Wartburgs, Škodas, and Dacias) to the brim with Western goods unavailable at home.

Young people of the 1980s were eager to take the opportunity to 'breathe the fresh air of freedom'. For young Hungarian backpackers – equipped with an Interrail pass to spend the night on the train, hitchhiked, stayed in youth hostels with a student card or simply slept in sleeping bags in public places – these trips became a symbolic escape. They saw the West as an aspirational ideal, an unattainable world where they could absorb new fashions, ideas and experiences, which they were eager to bring back home.

The average tourist's very limited travel allowance was good for a baguette and a bunch of browned, cut-price bananas, a day, in addition to the canned food and dry sausages brought from home. For many, a slice of pizza, a plate of spaghetti, or a fast-food burger was the highlight of the trip if they could fit it into their limited budget. The McDonald's craze in Eastern Europe also dates back to this period, when the craving for a hamburger made fast-food a symbol of Western travel for the low-end traveller. It was an iconic moment of the last years of the Kádár era when, on 29 April 1988, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Agriculture and Food, officially

opened the first domestic outlet of that American fast food chain, the first in the Soviet bloc, on Régiposta Street in downtown Pest. From then on, long queues snaked down the street in front of McDonalds, which was open for a surprisingly-long 14 hours a day. Together with the soon-be-opened Burger King, these were a sensation, as they were elsewhere in Eastern Europe.⁴⁰

Until the 1980s, Hungarian catering was exclusively basic Hungarian in style. Only one or two restaurants representing the Serbian and Greek minorities in Hungary (e.g. the 'Greek Jug' and the 'Serbian Restaurant' in Szentendre) brought limited ethnic flavours to the offer. German and Austrian cuisine was not alien to Hungarians because of its geo-cultural and historical antecedents, and it was also present in the restaurant offerings of the socialist era. The 'Berlin Restaurant' opened in 1960 (Szent István boulevard 13, Budapest). It advertised itself with German dishes prepared by German chefs.⁴¹ At the time, there were restaurants under the name of 'Sofia', 'Bucharest' and 'Belgrade', showcasing the cuisine of friendly socialist countries.

In addition, the then very popular and unique 'Baikal Tea-house and Restaurant' in the House of Soviet Culture and Science (Simmelweis Street, 5th district, Budapest) was perhaps the greatest success.⁴² It represented top gastronomy and introduced some staple dishes of Russian cuisine to the Hungarian public (e.g. Russian meat salad, pirogue, bulochki, syrniki, crab salad, solyanka soup, beetroot soup, pelmeni dumplings, cutlet slices, and Stroganoff steak). Vodka, Armenian cognac, or the Baikal cocktail made by combining the bull's blood-red wine from Eger and Soviet Igristoye champagne, were also popular drinks. Operating between 1973 and 1990, the catering unit was a worthy contender for the title of the country's first truly trendy restaurant. The tearoom at street level was a popular meeting place for downtown strollers and students, while the basement restaurant was the venue for more exclusive occasions.⁴³ There is no need to explain the political-ideological motivations behind this soft power gesture of Soviet-Hungarian friendship in a country where Russian was a compulsory subject in schools for children from the age of 10 years.

40 Pizza Hut arrived in Budapest, on Király Street, in 1991, at the time of the regime-change.

41 The Europa Restaurant, for example, hosted Austrian dinner parties in 1983. The Wernesgrüner and Kaltenberg Bavarian royal pubs also opened in the mid-1980s.

42 See the newsreel on the opening of the cultural complex: <<https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=21405> Budapest Filmstúdió, inv. no.: MFH_1974_05-01> accessed 18.3.2025.

43 Pál Somogyi was the interior designer of the pleasant environment, using glossy materials.

The Soviet Union, on the other hand, was not accessible to ordinary tourists, who could only travel there on official trips under controlled conditions. So, despite years of language-learning, there was little opportunity to use Russian. It was much easier to travel to other European countries of the Eastern Bloc. The relatively more-accessible trips to the Bulgarian coast, for instance, brought back home to Hungary the fashion for shopska salad. Trips to Yugoslavia (perhaps Italy, Greece or France) in the 1980s, made it possible for the Hungarian tourist travelling to the seaside, to taste fresh seafood, mussels, oysters and crabs, in addition to the canned herring, sardines, sprats, Albanian mussels, and Russian caviar, that reached Hungary in the socialist trade. (At the same time, love of seafood is still rather a characteristic of more open-minded, experienced travellers, while many Hungarians, even intellectuals, are more averse to it and stick conservatively to the good-old familiar tastes.)

Then, in the 1980s, home-made recipes, attempting to approximate the Italian taste-experience began to circulate, such as spaghetti Bolognese (made with Hungarian dry pasta and canned tomatoes) or home-made pizza, which imitated the original, but was made in a rectangular baking pan with Hungarian sausage on top. At the turn of the 1970s and the 1980s, the fondue-set appeared in the crockery shops and very quickly became a favourite dish at house parties, especially the recipe version of the Swiss cheese fondue. The raclette grill-set started to appear in shops and in more innovative households somewhat later, around the change of regime. It was at this time that French onion soup began to appear on the menus of some restaurants and on the tables of more experimental housewives.

It should be mentioned here that it was of great diplomatic significance – thanks to President Mitterand’s visit to Hungary in 1982 – that the French launched an architectural competition in 1984 for the new building of the French Institute, which was constructed on the Danube bank near the Chain Bridge in Budapest, between 1988 and 1992. The architecturally-sophisticated and progressive building was designed by the distinguished French architect, Georges Maurios, who still considers the Budapest building to be one of the most important works of his oeuvre.⁴⁴ The new French Institute, and the French restaurant opposite it operating in the garden

44 On the construction of the building see: *‘A KÉK Kortárs Építészeti Központ kiállítása a Budapesti Francia Intézetben, Kiállításkatalógus’* (‘KÉK Contemporary Architecture Centre exhibition at the French Institute in Budapest, Exhibition catalogue’) (Catalogue design: Németh, Zsuzsa) (Budapest: Budapesti Francia Intézet, 2013), online: Issuu; Published on 6 Oct, 2014 <<https://issuu.com/kekfoundation/docs/fo-utca-17>> accessed 20.3.2025.

of a historic Buda House – albeit expensive and, therefore, accessible to but a few – definitely drew attention to French cuisine in those days.

Hungarians also started to get acquainted with popular versions of ethnic cuisines from further afield – the Hungarian traveller abroad could stray into Indian, Chinese, Japanese or Korean diners. It was in the 1980s, however, that the first Chinese restaurant – the ‘Red Dragon’ (operated from 1982 to 1994 at Népköztársaság street 80, now Andrásy Avenue) – and the ‘Duck’ in the 1st district, were opened. The head chef of the ‘Red Dragon’ (Lajos Bíró) had authentic knowledge backed up by study trips to North Korea and China, but the recipes were re-tuned to bring the flavours closer to Hungarian tastes. Original raw materials were regularly sourced from Germany through the state-owned foreign trade company – Medimpex. The first Japanese restaurant opened a few years later, around 1985, opposite the Erkel Theatre (Luther street 4–6), and again after a slight delay, the first Korean restaurant (‘Seoul House’ in the 1st district, Fő street) opened in 1990, the year of the regime change. (It was only after the change of regime that cheaper Chinese and Turkish restaurants started to mushroom in Budapest. Thai and Vietnamese restaurants, in contrast to their current proliferation, are relatively recent arrivals.)

The evolution of recipes, reflecting reformist approaches, more adventurous flavours, and international culinary influences, is clearly traceable in the published cookbooks of the era and in media coverage of international cuisine connected to travel reports.⁴⁵ By the 1980s, a wave of new publications emerged, often richly illustrated with photographs, aiming to both modernise traditional Hungarian cuisine and to encourage creativity, variety, and openness to novelty in both everyday and festive cooking. Among these, the ‘99... Dishes’ series (featuring cheese/egg, potato, meat, and game/fish dishes, etc.) by Mari Lajos and her husband – photographer Károly Hemző – grew to 31 thematic volumes. This album-like series became a runaway success and remains a staple on many family bookshelves to this day. (The project began when Hemző, commissioned by Globus canning factory to shoot promotional images for the Arab markets, found the plain packaging uninspiring. His discerning wife decided to cook the canned contents creatively, thus marking the start of their collaboration.)

45 See the Hospitality industry database (‘Vendéglátóipar-történeti-adattár-adatbázisa’) for the download in Excel format, of the Hungarian Trade and Hospitality Industry Museum (Magyar Kereskedelmi és Vendéglátóipari Múzeum) Budapest <<https://mkvm.hu/vendeglatoipar-torteneti-dokumentacios-gyujtemeny/>> accessed 3.4.2025.

Celebrity chefs also shaped home cooking: László Benke, Gundel's head chef and Olympic cooking gold medalist, won housewives' hearts through his TV show *Főzőcske, de okosan!* ('Cook Smartly!'). Many women clipped and collected recipes from the popular weekly *Nők Lapja* ('Women's Magazine'). Meanwhile, the quarterly *Magyar Konyha* ('Hungarian Kitchen'), launched in 1977 by the Tourism Propaganda and Publishing Company, targeted more dedicated home cooks.⁴⁶

It should be added that in the 1980s, there was a significant upward momentum in the entrepreneurial sphere. It was, in fact, a period of a kind of grey economy. A good part of the catering industry became 'gebines'.⁴⁷ (The word means an enterprise operating under a lease contract, which may operate on a long-term rental basis for a fixed rent without accounting. It was most commonly used to refer to 'a catering business without accurate accounting during the party-state era.') In a report about one of the star chefs of the time, Lajos Bíró recalled, that:

it is also important to examine how the chef managed to stand out from the crowd. It was not only due to the fact that ... the average standard was very low, undeniably ... In the half-baked, entrepreneurial, profit-oriented units of socialism, the big money was made by cheating the owner, which was the state, and the guest on top of that.

After the change of regime, this money pump did not, of course, magically disappear. According to Lajos Bíró, what was new at the 'Red Dragon', for example, was that 'the guest was not cheated'. He added, that later on, when he became part owner of his next shops, he made sure that he was not short-changed, but it remained a matter of vanity that his guests always got a quality service.⁴⁸

So, all in all, the liberalisation of the late Kádár era, and the relative permeability of borders, began to challenge the ethnocentricity of Hungarian cuisine, and to colour the palette with some typical pieces of Western-European standard street-food, and the ethnic cuisines of other nations. It can be stated, that the consumer-driven mobility had quietly mentally-eroded socialist isolationism.

46 Today, the magazine continues in operation – in print and digital formats– with substantial state subsidies, chaired by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's wife, Anikó Lévai <<https://magyarkonyhaonline.hu/gasztronomagazin>> accessed 28.3.2025.

47 The term is probably based on the German term *Gewinn* ('profit') in its native German form.

48 Quoted in an interview with Bíró by Horváth, B. Balázs, 'Bíró bezár – Ha ez itt a vég, hát az nagyon derék', ('Bíró closes – If this is the end, then so be it'), 5.10.2022: <<https://index.hu/kultur/degusztator/2022/05/10/biro-lajos-portre-gasztronomia-buja-diszno-k-sef/>> accessed 19.3.2025.

After the change of regime, gastronomy, and especially the Hungarian wine industry, started to undergo thorough quality changes, although the old reflexes were still in effect for a long time. The 1990s were, in many ways, a decade of transition. The real sophisticated gastronomic breakthrough, the convergence of the offer with international trends, the reform of the recipes of Hungarian dishes, and the emergence of restaurant businesses that achieved international success, began more from the turn of the millennium, and even more so again from the 2010s. However, the process was unfortunately interrupted by the lockdown and recession caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, to which many businesses fell victim.

In spite of the unifying impact of the bourgeois and socialist period (public catering,⁴⁹ the food industry, service sector, education, etc.), recognisable regional differences can still be observed today in Hungary – in the traditional tastes of larger regions and in family cooking-habits that have carried on local traditions. Of course, individual situations, ambitions, abilities, and the former social status of a family, can still create exceptions in the field of knowledge. The role of food heritage in constructing the identity of groups and localities, including Hungarian minorities and diaspora communities outside Hungary, could be the topic of another article.⁵⁰

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LUCY M. LONG

PERSONAL MEMORY, COLLECTIVE HERITAGE, AND QUANDARIES OF TRADITION: THREE APPALACHIAN MOUNTAIN DISHES

ABSTRACT

I suggest here that personal memory can be a key to understanding how individuals and groups construct their own notions of which foodways products and practices are heritage and what that means. It also can mediate between heritage and tradition, challenging Dan Ben-Amos's assertion that the two are incompatible since heritage is static and canonical while tradition is dynamic and fluid.

Heritage is popularly thought of as a legacy from the past – objects, customs, ways of thinking and doing that have been passed down over generations and that provide an historical foundation for our present-day identity.¹ Scholars in a variety of disciplines, including folklore and food studies, recognize the constructed nature of the concept, acknowledging that it is a selection of what is thought to have come from the past that then is used to define how one thinks of themselves today.² This selection involves reinterpretation according to the specific contexts in which it appears and the uses to which it is put. It also serves as justification for actions,

1 Reference to this study: Lucy M. Long: Personal Memory, Collective Heritage, and Quandaries of Tradition: Three Appalachian Mountain Dishes. In Anikó Bádi and Patricia Lysaght (eds.): *Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage*. Budapest: ELTE RCH Institute of Ethnology – Museum of Ethnography, 2025. pp. 77–94.

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2 For example, see Ayora-Diaz, Steffan Igor ed.: *The Cultural Politics of Food, Taste, and Identity: A Global Perspective* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021); Brulotte, Rhonda L. and Di Giovine, Michael A. eds.: *Edible Identities: Food as Cultural Heritage* (New York: Routledge, 2014); Long, Lucy M.: 'Culinary Tourism as Public Folklore: Heritage in Negotiating Competitiveness and Sustainability', *Journal of American Folklore* 137/543 (Winter 2024), 45–60.

attitudes, and choices in the present and as a resource for future performances of self, identity, and values. In folklorist Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's words: 'heritage is [...] a mode of cultural production in the present that has recourse to the past'.³

As a construction – a mode of production – heritage would seem to be dynamic and fluid, but some scholars critique it as static. Folklorist Dan Ben-Amos, for example, states emphatically that 'The packaging of traditional culture for modern consumers deflates it from the symbolic values of these words and objects within their communities. When heritage begins, tradition ends'.⁴

In relation to food, Brulotte and Di Giovine, similarly pointed out in 2014, that various global movements, such as UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage lists which bring attention to, validate, and preserve various dishes, ingredients, cooking styles, and meal systems, have frequently led to the canonisation, ossification, and even invention of foodways products and practices. Heritage, they conclude, has become an 'added value' for marketing, tourism, and nationalist purposes.⁵

From this perspective, heritage is an official category of cultural production, a set of practices or products that have been canonised and crystalised by those in authority or power as representing a particular view of the past that supports their vision of identity in the present and future. The same scholars state that food as cultural heritage is tied to memory: 'as individuals collectively remember past experiences with certain meals and imagine their ancestors having similar experiences. When this occurs, food is transformed into heritage'.⁶ It also opens heritage-making to all individuals and groups.

However, not every individual has the same memory of the same food or foodways experience. They may remember different aspects of it, attach different emotions to it, or interpret its meanings differently. Nor is every food memorable and fodder for heritage for every individual participating in it. If heritage is made up of memories, then it is as multifaceted as the memories themselves. Thus, just as individual remembrances can change in content and meaning, so too can individual perceptions of heritage change. In this sense, as Graham, Ashworth, and Turnbridge, pointed out, heritage can be understood as [...] 'a negotiated reality – a social construction

3 Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara: 'Theorizing Heritage', *Ethnomusicology* 39/3 (1995), 367–380.

4 Ben-Amos, Don: 'Between Intangible Cultural Heritage and Folklore', *Folklor/Edebiyat folklore/literature* 29/114 (2023), 386; 348. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22559/folklor.2459>.

5 Brulotte and Di Giovine: *Edible Identities: Food as Cultural Heritage*.

6 Brulotte and Di Giovine: *Edible Identities: Food as Cultural Heritage*, 1.

that evolves through time and which is simultaneously capable of representing a plurality of heritages.⁷

Memory, I suggest, can be a key to understanding how individuals and groups construct their own notions of which foodways practices are heritage, what they mean, and how they can be used. Drawing on work by folklorists such as Hafstein, Noyes, and others,⁸ I suggest here that we can better understand the dynamics between heritage and memory by identifying the source of heritage claims and then exploring how and why they became meaningful memories to individuals as well as to the larger collective group. This construction, presentation, and affirmation of culinary heritage, occurs on four levels:

OFFICIAL/ELITE (Agents: institutions with power and authority, such as, UNESCO, State tourism boards, arts councils, cultural centres and museums)

POPULAR – Mass-mediated/Commercial (Agents: Restaurants, Cookbooks, Food Media)

FOLK/ VERNACULAR – Of ‘the people’ (Agents: Home cooks, Local Restaurants)

PERSONAL – Individual experiences, memories and interpretations.

I recognise that dividing society into such levels is an out-dated notion and that modern society does not fall neatly into such categories, but I think the levels offer a useful heuristic for looking at who is doing the producing and the interpreting of both memories and heritage. As Halbwachs⁹ and others have noted, individual memories exist within society, but folklorists recognise that individuals have agency in the making of meaning and that they bring their own unique experiences, values, tastes, and circumstances to the selection and interpretation of products or practices that they then consider to be heritage.

7 Graham, Brian – Ashworth, Greg and Turnbridge, John: *A Geography of Heritage: Power, Culture, and Economy* (Abingdon-on-Thames, UK: Routledge, 2000).

8 Hafstein, Valdimar Tr.: ‘Intangible Heritage as a Festival; or, Folklorization Revisited’, *Journal of American Folklore* 131/520 (2018), 127–149; Noyes, Dorothy, and Abrahams, Roger D.: ‘From Calendar Custom to National Memory: European Commonplaces’, in Ben-Amos, Dan and Weissberg, Lillian eds.: *Cultural Memory and the Construction of Identity* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999), 77–98.

9 Halbwachs, Maurice: *The Collective Memory* (New York, Harper & Row Colophon Books, 1980 [Translated from *La mémoire collective*] [Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1950]).

I use as illustration three dishes current in the Southern Appalachian Mountain region of the United States, an area that is part of my own heritage and one in which I have done extensive ethnographic research. Fried green tomatoes, soup beans, and apple stack cake represent the continuum of private/domestic and public/commercial foodways. Each originated in a different level and suggests the dynamics by which memories get created, disseminated and turned into tradition as well as crystalised into heritage.

THE CULTURAL CONTEXT

The Appalachian Mountain range stretches south to north across eastern North America, but, culturally, 'Appalachia' refers to the southern part of the chain, from the Ohio River valley and northern foothills south to Alabama. This region was inhabited by Native American cultures that thrived in the woodland environment rich in natural resources, but the mountains posed hardships for most European colonisers, slowing settlement and creating a perception – and in some cases, a reality – of isolation from modernity. In the later 19th century, two basic stereotypes developed: the first a romanticisation of mountain culture as survivals from Elizabethan England; the other as backwards, depraved, and ignorant.¹⁰

Although Appalachian foodways were similar to rural 'pioneer' American ones, they were stereotyped as primitive and simple, lacking culinary discernment and reflecting a culture of poverty, dependent on hunting, fishing, foraging, and hard-scrabble farming on steep mountainsides. Tourist souvenirs and 'humorous' cookbooks present it as consisting of moonshine (homemade corn whiskey), 'road-kill', and small mammals dismissed by mainstream American food culture, such as opossums, raccoons, and squirrels.

Perceptions of Appalachia and its food cultures began changing in the mid-2000s, partly in response to shifts in mainstream society and 'foodie' trends that emphasised regional specialties and local and organic production. A number of cookbooks and chefs garnered attention from the elite, gourmet food world; restaurants and local governments began promoting the region as a culinary tourism destination; and, in the last decade, national food media has recognised Appalachian foodways as a

10 Starnes, Richard D.: *Creating the Land of the Sky: Tourism and Society in Western North Carolina* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005).

viable and valid regional cuisine. While there are no official proclamations of heritage, it is implied in many of the presentations of ingredients, dishes, and preservation practices. Shops, exhibits, brochures, and restaurants at state-sponsored rest stops and museums give a stamp of approval and 'authenticity' to selected foodways products and practices, and initiatives such as the Appalachian Foodways Practitioner Fellowships, based at Berea College, Kentucky, and funded by arts and humanities councils and the state, function similarly to the UNESCO lists of heritage.

EXAMPLE 1: FRIED GREEN TOMATOES

Fried green tomatoes are slices of un-ripe tomatoes dredged in a mixture of cornmeal or flour, then fried or baked. They are assumed by many residents, as well as outsiders, to be a traditional southern and Appalachian dish, frequently included in restaurants as a side, or featured in more gourmet presentations as a 'stack' with fresh mozzarella, fried cakes of corn grits, a slice of red tomato, pimento cheese, and a sprig of fresh basil.

The dish actually does not have origins or a long history in the southern mountains. Historians think that it may have entered the northeastern and Mid-Atlantic US in the late 1800s with immigrants from Eastern Europe. It was adopted and promoted by home economists in the 1920s and 1930s as a meat substitute for breakfast. There are no references to its presence in the Southern part of the country until 1987, with the publication of a novel, *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistlestop Café*, by Alabama native, Patricia Neal, better known by her stage name, Fannie Flagg. The dish became nationally known in 1991, through a popular film based on the book. Titled *Fried Green Tomatoes*, the film turned into a franchise with Flagg writing sequels along with a cookbook and packaged mixes branded as 'The Whistlestop Café'.

This history suggests that the perceptions of fried green tomatoes having southern Appalachian culinary heritage actually comes from the popular or mass-mediated level. Some restaurants attached to state-funded cultural centres that present Appalachian food now also carry the dish, shifting it to an applied official level. Several anecdotes suggest how personal memory comes into play.



Fig. 1. Fried green tomatoes sold at Tamarack, WV. (Photo: Lucy M. Long)

The first incident, and one that actually pushed me to look at these issues, occurred several years ago when I was chatting with a sister-in-law and told her what I had learned about the history of fried green tomatoes being a recent introduction to southern cooking. She got visibly upset and said that could not be true since they were a tradition in her family. I pointed out that her family was actually from Baltimore, not a southern state, but a Mid-Atlantic one, so they could have obtained the recipe from the early economists. That still did not ‘feel’ right to her, since her memories of eating them were also from when she had lived in the South.

Folklorists Jón Þór Pétursson and Valdimar Tr. Hafstein discuss a similar ‘feeling’ attached to the soft cheese, Skyr, in Iceland, by residents and consumers. Drawing from various scholars in food studies, they give their translation of French cultural sociologist Nathalie Heinich who wrote: ‘One might even say that emotion is the proof of heritage; if the proof of the pudding, as the saying goes, is in the eating, the proof of heritage would be that it moves us.’¹¹

The emotions my sister-in-law displayed suggest that the dish represented her heritage, that it was part of the historical foundation of her identity. The suggestion that it was not a long-standing tradition seemed to threaten that sense of identity and initially angered her. We then discussed how newly-established traditions could still provide a sense of connection to the past and place, and she seemed appeased, although still somewhat skeptical – partly because her own memories still validated her interpretation of the dish as heritage.

Another example, again from within my own family, also highlights the primacy of personal memory in ‘feeling’ heritage. My daughter was planning her wedding and wanted to have a traditional southern mountain menu since her guests were coming from around the world. She requested fried green tomatoes. When I told her they were not really traditional to the region, she pointed out they were a tradition for us. She had spent her summers in the mountains with my parents, and one of our end-of-summer rituals was to go out to eat. Since she was vegetarian, there were limited options, and fried green tomatoes was the one she usually chose. Her personal memories made the dish a meaningful tradition for her. It represented her relationship with her grandparents, her love of the mountains, and her ethical values

11 Heinich, Nathalie: *De la Visibilité. Excellence et Singularité en Régime Médiatique* (Paris, Éditions Gallimard, coll. Bibliothèque des Sciences Humaines, 2012), 21. Translation in Pétursson, Jon Dor and Hafstein, Valdimar T.R.: ‘Stirring up Skyr: From Live Cultures to Cultural Heritage,’ *Journal of American Folklore* 135/535 (2022), 64.

in her choice to be vegetarian. Although it was not part of the collective heritage or even memories of her immediate family, she felt it was part of her personal heritage, regardless of its actual origins and use within the larger culture.

In the final example, there is neither emotional connection nor personal memory exhibited. In 2019, I was in a home-cooking diner in the mountains of West Virginia and saw that fried green tomatoes were on the menu as a side dish. When I asked the owner if it was a family recipe, she said that she had never heard of them before, but tourists kept asking for them. She now buys them frozen in bulk at Costco.¹² They hold no memories for her, and they were simply another item to sell. She also did not make any distinction on her menus of other traditional mountain foods along with standard American casual dining items.

Her customers seemed to include local residents as well as tourists. I did not interview them, so I do not know if they attached heritage to the dish, but it is likely that the tourists came away assuming that the menu represented what was commonly eaten in the mountains. Whether or not they reflected on the experience, their personal memory of seeing fried green tomatoes there would affirm the popular mass-mediated assumptions of its southern mountain heritage, helping those assumptions to circulate on the vernacular level.

EXAMPLE 2: APPLE STACK CAKE

The second dish illustrates movement from localised personal memories to the official level, then dropping down to the popular, mass-mediated one. Apple stack cake is made of six or more cookie-like layers that are stacked together with a sauce of dried apples and sorghum or molasses. The cake has been presented by influential cookbook writers as iconic of the best of southern Appalachian cooking.

I first became aware of apple stack cake in the early 2000s, through conference papers and then a book by Dr. Mark Sohn, a professor at Pikeville College in eastern Kentucky in the heart of the southern Appalachian Mountains. Originally from the Pacific coast, Sohn had studied culinary arts in Paris, then moved to Kentucky to accept a position in educational psychology. In 1978, he started teaching an Appalachian studies class, and, as part of that, invited students to bring in family

¹² Costco is a national warehouse for shopping by membership only. It is very popular throughout the U.S., but is famous for offering items only in large quantities.



Fig. 2. Apple stack cake at a restaurant in western North Carolina. (Photo: Lucy M. Long)

dishes and recipes. A decade later, he began writing a food column for a local newspaper, printing recipes that he had developed from his students' offerings. He also began travelling and documenting foodways in that area, then, in his own words, 'reworked' the recipes for several cookbooks, starting in 1992, 1994, and 1996. Then, in 2005, he published *Appalachian Home Cooking: History, Culture, & Recipes*¹³ to much acclaim from the professional food world. In his talks and writing, Sohn presented stack cake as iconic of Appalachian cooking, as representing a culinary heritage that could be respected as a sophisticated and complex cuisine.

I was not familiar with the cake, even though I had spent a lot of time with my father's family in western North Carolina and had done extensive fieldwork on Appalachian food traditions. I began asking about it and found that few people had heard of it, aside from its inclusion in another cookbook that had been published in 1991 by a Kentucky native, Ronni Lundy,¹⁴ who has gone on to publish extensively and insightfully about the diversity of mountain foods.

Both authors were initially working within a time in which mainstream America paid little attention to food in general and in which the derogatory stereotypes of Appalachia were still assumed true by many and were played up by marketing. As both Sohn and Lundy won public attention and recognition, their opinions became 'official' voices validating the heritage status of the cake. Recipes for it are now found frequently in other cookbooks and food media, and most present it as having a long history in the mountains. They also describe the large amount of work, time, and skill needed to make it, implying that mountain cookery is not the simple, solely functional, and un-creative chore presented in the stereotypes.

A clue to the continued emphasis on stack cake is a story described in a 1980s magazine column described by a native Kentuckian, Sidney Saylor Farr, who was an archivist at Berea College in Kentucky. The story went that people in the mountains were too poor to have wedding cakes, so friends and family would bring one layer to a wedding, stack those up, and present it to the bride and groom. Although Farr stated that the story was probably not true, it caught the imagination of others writing about mountain food, and later, of, the elite food world and people marketing or promoting Appalachian foods. Both Lundy and Sohn repeat the story, saying that

13 Sohn, Mark: *Appalachian Home Cooking: History, Culture, & Recipes* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2005).

14 Lundy, Ronni: *Shuck Beans, Stack Cakes, and Honest Fried Chicken: The Heart and Soul of Southern Country Kitchens* (Washington D.C.: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1994).

it was improbable, but that seems to have simply planted the seed of its existence for others. Mountain residents now repeat the story in the numerous blogs and websites, emphasising that it represents the hospitality and generosity as well as the community-mindedness of mountain culture. Through these stories, the cake now represents a heritage that people can be proud of, embrace and promote.

Personal memories of the cake seem to be the basis for the original documentation and inclusion of it in printed cookbooks and recipe memoirs. My research suggests that these memories were geographically limited to isolated pockets rather than widely held throughout the region. The heritage it now is framed as representing, however, is a homogenised, unified one, ignoring the diversity of class, race, ethnicity, religion, occupations, and lifestyles that actually make up the region.

To complicate the cake, two recent experiences challenge my observations and also created personal memories for me. In the Spring of 2024, I visited friends who were from another region but were staying in the mountains southwest of where my own family was from. While at a casual eatery frequented by 'locals', I asked them if they had ever heard of apple stack cake. The young women serving us said that her aunt and other relatives made them, and they even had one sitting in the refrigerator and could give me a slice. The dessert was not on the menu – they did not sell it all the time, only when someone had time to make it, but they said it was a family recipe and grew up with it. When I told them it was being promoted in gourmet circles as representing heritage, they seemed surprised but delighted to see it recognised and celebrated. They both proudly posed for a photograph with it. They also said that their aunt would be thrilled by the attention.

Ironically, several hours later, I stopped in eastern Tennessee at a casual restaurant attached to an Appalachian culture and history museum. Both tourists and 'locals' eat there, and they serve a range of foods that represent their culinary heritage as well as items likely to please most customers. I had eaten there numerous times and had never seen stack cake, so I asked the women (young and old) in the kitchen if they had ever heard of the dish. They all said no, and when I told them it was promoted as an icon of mountain food culture, one said that was odd since they were a museum dedicated to Appalachian heritage, and even though they had grown up in the area, they had never heard of it.

This confirmed my own experiences throughout the region, but as I was leaving, an older, white-haired woman stopped to say hello (as is common in the southern

mountains). When I asked her about the cake, she not only said she remembered such cakes from her childhood in the area and loved them, but she would make one for me if I wanted to come visit her that afternoon! I could not stay, but the interchange also confirmed what I had thought about the cake existing in ‘pockets of tradition,’ perhaps family-based, rather than as a community-wide tradition.

Critiques of heritage point out that value is added to a product or process by connecting it to a particular past.¹⁵ In this case, those individuals holding personal memories of the cake acted pleased when I pointed out that it is considered iconic. Their own memories of it were positive, connecting them to family members, but the idea that it was heritage meant to them that those memories were shared with other people in the region, and, since the cake is admired, that they represented something more than just their own experiences. Their memories were then elevated to represent their identity, their heritage.

EXAMPLE 3: SOUP BEANS

The final example is a dish that was a staple in many Appalachian households, and is known and eaten throughout the region. ‘Soup beans’ are made from dried beans – usually pinto, but other varieties can be used – that are slow-cooked with fatback¹⁶ or a ham hock, into a thick soup. Although variations abound, they differ from the usual reconstituted dried beans in the ‘gravy’ that forms as they cook. They are then served, traditionally with cornbread, raw onion, and homemade pickles or chow chow – a sweet and spicy pickled relish made from whatever vegetables are on hand, usually cabbage, onions, peppers, and green tomatoes.

Soup beans are usually homemade or found in casual home-dining establishments catering to ‘locals’ or to customers looking for a taste of ‘country’. They are included in most ethnographic descriptions of traditional mountain foodways and in cookbooks marketed as Appalachian, especially ones that present a ‘down-home,’ rural, though somewhat backwards view of the region. The dish accurately reflects the culinary history of the region in terms of the ingredients available, traditional

15 Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara: *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 149–150.

16 Fatback is a strip of fat from the back of a pig. It might include the skin, and is oftentimes dried or cured in salt. It is traditionally used in the American South and Southern Appalachia, added to beans (legumes) or vegetables (collard greens, in particular) as they cook.



Fig. 3. Soup beans and corn bread. (Photo: Lucy M. Long)

cooking styles, the socio-economic history of scattered poverty, the need for living off the land, and a culinary aesthetic emphasising practicality.

For those who grew up on soup beans, the dish elicits memories that are both warm and unpleasant, depending on the circumstances of that growing up. For some, they are reminders of poverty and hardship; for others, they evoke family, and reminders of 'hardiness' – strength in the face of hardship. In either case, they represent Appalachian culinary heritage from the personal and the vernacular level.

Jon Holtzman, in his study of food and memory, observes that it is the accumulation of daily experiences that make memories of food powerful.¹⁷ It is in the everyday, seemingly quotidian experiences, that emotions and other memories get intertwined with food, and we oftentimes do not realise those memories exist until something calls them to mind.¹⁸

This happened one time when I took my father out to dinner. Notoriously thrifty, he had no interest in the gourmet presentations of mountain food that were starting to occur in the 2010s, so we went to a casual restaurant attached to the Asheville farmers' market. They served him a bowl of pinto beans with biscuits, which were more upscale than the usual accompaniment of cornbread. He happily accepted them as satisfying his tastes and his values, both of which he felt represented his Appalachian heritage. Whenever I would suggest he try something else, he would reply, 'I'm just a hillbilly', oftentimes a derogatory term, but in his case, accurately emphasising his origins.

I also have personal memories of soup beans as a staple in the homes of my 'mountain' relatives. There was always a pot of beans on the stove, and if we were hungry, we were welcome to a bowl. It was also part of my father's repertoire of dishes he cooked for us, contrasting with my mother, who came from the flatlands and a more 'proper' family. That difference clarified the mountain heritage of the beans.

The dish's status as heritage begins at both the personal and vernacular level, although for most people, that status is implied rather than proclaimed. It seems too ordinary

17 Holtzman, Jon D.: 'Food and memory', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 35 (2006), 373.

18 For more on the relationship of food and memory, see Sutton, David: *Remembrance of Repasts: An Anthropology of Food and Memory* (London, England: Berg, 2001). For an analysis of the role of rituals and festivals in creating food memories, see Long, Lucy M.: 'Apples as "Objects of Memory" in the Midwestern Imagination', in Beth Forrest and Greg de St. Maurice, eds., *Food in Memory and Imagination: Place, Space and Taste* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2022), 173–185.

to be put up on a pedestal in the way that most claims of heritage appear. In that way, it affirms the values felt to define mountain food culture – resourceful, practical, humble, not ‘going above one’s raising,’ but also delicious and filling.

Interestingly, some regional chefs and restaurants are now ‘elevating’ soup beans as a heritage food that represents an authentic Appalachian culture of resourcefulness, living and eating in a sustainable manner with the seasons and from smaller gardens, and making use, respectfully, of natural resources. Recent initiatives to save heritage seeds are also affirming personal memories of soup beans as heritage, perhaps shifting them to the official level.

MUSINGS

These three dishes illustrate different ways in which personal memories interact with official, popular, and vernacular presentations of heritage. The status – implied or articulated – of each as heritage, comes from a different source and then is disseminated through various means to various types of audiences. Examining these as negotiations between different levels of society offers a framework for identifying where the concepts and attitudes are coming from, by whom they are adopted, perhaps why, and how personal memory comes in.

This emphasis on personal memory also raises questions about the difference between tradition and heritage. Are they, as Ben-Amos claims, incompatible, since heritage is static and canonical while tradition is dynamic and fluid? Not all folklorists agree with him, but the distinction might be useful on a phenomenological level. Pétursson and Hafstein (2022) point out: ‘To invoke tradition is thus to give meaning to actions and objects in the present, to connect them to other people and places and times, and to charge them with emotion or affect.’¹⁹ Heritage seems to do the same. Furthermore, as Brulotte and Di Giovine state: “heritage is less an identifiable thing than a constructed discourse strategically deployed for political, economic, or ideological goals [...] heritage imparts particular value claims on people, their histories, social structures, and traditions....”²⁰

19 Pétursson and Hafstein: ‘Stirring up Skeyr’, 56.

20 Di Giovine, Michael A. and Brulotte, Ronda L.: ‘Introduction: Food and Foodways as Cultural Heritage’, in Brulotte, Ronda L. and Di Giovine, Michael A. eds.: *Edible Identities: Food as Cultural Heritage* (New York: Routledge, 2014, 1–27), 1.

Heritage, however, seems to go beyond tradition to be perceived as a fundamental and unchangeable aspect of an individual's or group's identity – an attitude of 'the past is the past, and we can't do anything about it'. However, what can change is the selection of aspects of that past and the choice to act upon them or not. Tradition, on the other hand, at least, on a popular level, is treated as guidelines for how to do something, but variable according to circumstances and identities. Also, new traditions can be established, even replacing older ones, reflecting newer identities without threatening the existence of our heritage. Personal memories can shift a product or practice from tradition to heritage and vice versa, adding emotional weight or diluting it. Perhaps approaching tradition and heritage as a continuum rather than as a dichotomy reflects more accurately the ways in which the past is present for us.

Similarly, personal memory itself, as all historians and folklorists know, is dynamic and changeable. It is shaped by others' remembrances, by contexts in which it is recalled, and the individual's own changing circumstance and identities. Scholars of memory studies suggest the term 'remembering' in order to emphasise that this is a process, oftentimes driven by disputes over defining and representing the past. They also emphasise that individuals are socially situated, so that their 'remembering' is not done in isolation, but also that collective remembering involves individual memories. As one of the founding thinkers of the field states: 'Perhaps the most interesting feature of collective memory is its restless nature.'²¹ The same can be said of both heritage and tradition.

Heritage presentations presume, as well as create, even, invent, collective memories with particular associations and meanings. Those memories can then be shared among individuals, creating a sense of collective identity and belonging, and affirming that heritage. These presentations may also evoke individual memories, perhaps making explicit personal perceptions of heritage. If those memories are challenged, their relationship to heritage, tradition, and identity become clear – to the holder as well as to the outsider. While heritage might be a static construct for some actors and in some contexts, the relationship between it and memory is fluid and dynamic, with the possibility of creating new meanings and emotions that then tie it to an individual's or group's identity.

21 Roediger, Henry L. III and Abel, Magdalena: 'Collective Memory: A New Area of Cognitive Study'. *ScienceDirect* 19/7 (2015), 361.

Furthermore, these concepts are scholarly constructs developed to explain what we observe. They are more than simply terms to parse, however. Groups and individuals use both heritage and tradition as justification for actions and for building alliances and divisions based on the identities which they envision for themselves. Attending to personal memories and rememberings can help us to better understand how emotions are attached to those constructs, and how and why they are meaningful. We can then perhaps act to re-create memories and dispel others.

Food offers incredible opportunities for memory making as well as for constructing, expressing, and negotiating heritage and tradition. Perhaps those personal memories can also support present identities that emphasise our similarities and common humanity rather than our differences.

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ESZTER CSONKA-TAKÁCS

FOOD HERITAGE: PARADIGM SHIFT IN THE IMPLEMENTATION PRACTICES OF THE 2003 UNESCO CONVENTION FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

ABSTRACT

This article explores the concept and governance of food heritage within the framework of UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. The primary aim of this Convention is to preserve the heritage of supranational communities. From the beginning, there were typical heritages that were promoted by a member state as a kind of national identity, and although the professional evaluation body had, quite early on, reflected on the wording of the community/national character element in the nomination documents (the terms 'unique', 'special', 'individual', were included in the list of prohibited terms), the themes promoted in some cases have continued to reinforce this trend.

In recent years, national/regional identity foods have become more common in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Although, based on the definition of the Convention, the nomination documents are not about the product or the individual food (beverages, for example), but about the customs and traditions of their preparation and consumption, it is still about food heritage, which has the same meaning as national character. Recently, there has also been a discussion about the definition of food heritage as a separate domain, because, at the moment, and based on current classifications, this heritage element can appear in several sites in the nomination documents.

In my article, I will outline how the type of food that defines the national character of a country becomes heritage – how it is formulated as being an aspect of communal

knowledge, practice, and form of expression. I will also introduce the concepts used in the Hungarikum system and the principles laid down in law in this regard.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

As the head¹ of the organisation responsible for the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Hungary, based, since 2009, at the Hungarian Open Air Museum in Szentendre, I have been able to get an overview of the operation of the Convention and the processes and procedures involved – from the first inscriptions stage, the listing process, the development of procedures and various concepts, to the refinement of evaluation criteria. I also have had the opportunity to attend numerous UNESCO meetings where the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage discussed the dossiers of heritage elements submitted for inscription by State Parties. I was personally involved in the debates and processes. I am familiar with the Hungarian practice in this context at close range, having participated in the establishment and the ongoing operation of the system in relation to Hungary, and by closely following the national processes and observing how an object or a tradition becomes recognised as heritage.²

CULTURAL HERITAGE

Before delving into the concept of food heritage and examining its practices, I consider it necessary to reflect first of all on certain key aspects of the broader discourse on heritage. These considerations may provide a useful framework for

1 Reference to this study: Eszter Csonka-Takács: Food Heritage: Paradigm Shift in the Implementation Practices of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. In Anikó Báti and Patricia Lysaght (eds.): *Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage*. Budapest: ELTE RCH Institute of Ethnology – Museum of Ethnography, 2025. pp. 95–115.

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2 The 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage focuses on community knowledge and practice, related objects, tools, sites, knowledge transfer, reinterpretation and community identity. The Convention defines different domains that express the themes and contexts of the intangible cultural heritage elements (oral traditions, performing arts, social rites and customs, natural knowledge, traditional crafts), which can be included in national inventories and from there in the representative list of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity.

gaining an understanding of the communication processes and the cultural phenomena associated with food heritage.

The concept of cultural heritage and its institutionalisation is the outcome of a complex, evolving process, shaped by the interwoven influences of historical, social, and economic phenomena. Cultural heritage does not exist in isolation; rather, it emerges from a socially constructed and institutionalised framework, underscoring its inherently artificial and mediated character. In contemporary discourse, heritage has become a readily-mobilisable and widely-applied notion, even though it remains inherently difficult to define it with precision.

Although the concept of heritage initially emerged in association with specific socio-cultural values – such as religious buildings – appreciation of it and its use were primarily framed within the logic of private ownership, rather than being understood as a shared, communal legacy. During the Renaissance, the notion that heritage should be visible, publicly appreciated, and accessible to all, had not yet taken root. The prevailing emphasis on private possession is reflected in the treatment of castles and monuments at that time, which were frequently left unprotected, and were often partially or entirely demolished, in order to make way for new constructions or to meet practical, material needs.

It was from the late 1960s onwards that the notion of a ‘common heritage of humanity’ began to gain prominence. This marked a significant paradigm shift, as, from that time, the understanding of heritage moved beyond the confines of private ownership into the public domain, thereby attracting international attention. A pivotal moment in this transformation was UNESCO’s renowned international campaign to rescue the monuments of Egyptian Nubia, which were threatened by the rising waters of Lake Nasser. The meticulous dismantling and relocation of the Abu Simbel temples, block by block, became a powerful symbol of a new, globally-coordinated approach, to heritage preservation – one grounded in shared responsibility ideals and international cooperation.³ From this point forward, heritage was increasingly framed as a collective legacy belonging to all of humanity.

The first substantial scholarly enquiries into heritage emerged in the 1980s. This era is often described as the time of ‘heritage expansion’ (extension patrimoniale) or the

3 <<https://whc.unesco.org/en/convention/>> accessed 16 April 2025; and Romagnoli, M.: ‘Gastronomic heritage elements at UNESCO: Problems, reflections on and interpretations of a new heritage category’, *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* 14 (2019), 159.

‘everything-as-heritage’ (tout-patrimonial) phase, during which virtually any object, site, or practice, could potentially attain heritage status through institutional mechanisms.⁴

In this broadened context, anything deemed worthy of preservation, protection, conservation, or transmission, could be designated as heritage. This led to the emergence of the concept of ‘heritagization’ (patrimonialisation), which refers, not merely to the object or tradition itself, but to the process through which it becomes recognised as heritage. Heritagization entails mechanisms of selection and exclusion, highlighting the sociopolitical dynamics that determine which elements of the past are valorised, and by which social groups.

As a constructed and evolving process, heritagization continuously adapts to new categories and values – most notably with a growing focus on intangible elements such as practices, skills, and expressions. It encompasses a wide range of meanings, from gastronomy understood as a living social tradition, to war heritage embodied in historical architecture and serving as a site of memory and as a warning against future violence.

The increasing prevalence of the term ‘heritagization’ can be attributed to the continuous expansion of the contemporary heritage movement, which has often been marked by top-down decision-making and, in some cases, excessive commodification. This is exemplified by the inclusion of both tangible and intangible cultural elements on UNESCO’s internationally-recognised heritage lists, established under the framework of the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage,⁵ and the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Heritagization is thus understood as a dynamic process by which cultural – whether tangible or intangible – or natural phenomena acquire heritage status, and are consequently deemed worthy of being safeguarded by a particular community. In UNESCO’s terminology, such communities are referred to as ‘heritage bearers’, who assume responsibility for the ongoing care, transmission, and the vitality of these practices or objects, thus ensuring their relevance and sustainability for future generations.

4 Romagnoli: ‘Gastronomic heritage elements at UNESCO...’, 159.

5 <<https://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/>>; <<https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention>> accessed 16 April 2025.

The success of UNESCO's Nubian campaign led to the drafting of the World Heritage Convention, a foundational document that established a global commitment to the protection of cultural values deemed to be of universal importance. However, a sense of insufficiency soon followed the adoption of the 1972 Convention, revealing the need for a further international framework that would address the safeguarding of intangible cultural elements – a need that eventually culminated in the 2003 Convention.

In 1973, the Bolivian Minister of Foreign Affairs submitted a memorandum to the Director-General of UNESCO, urging the international community to take action against the exploitation and misappropriation of folklore – including traditional music, dance, and crafts. He proposed the establishment of an international mechanism for listing these cultural expressions in order to safeguard them from unauthorised use, particularly in contexts of commercial exploitation, exportation, and appropriation by third parties.⁶

Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is fundamentally distinct from tangible heritage in several key respects. While tangible heritage emphasises physical authenticity and the criterion of 'Outstanding Universal Value' – a prerequisite for inscription on the World Heritage List – ICH is rooted in symbolic, emotional, and commemorative significance. The defining attributes of ICH are not fixed in material permanence or historical authenticity, but rather lie in its inherent dynamism, capacity for transformation, and the processes of recreation, transmission, promotion, and revitalisation, enacted by the communities that sustain it.

The 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage was established with the goal of preserving knowledge, skills, and expressive traditions that are transmitted from generation to generation, and which constitute the cultural identity of communities, groups, and individuals. The Convention also aims to design and implement safeguarding measures at local, national, and international levels. It was within this framework that the term 'intangible cultural heritage' (ICH) came into formal use.

In the Hungarian context, the concept of intangible cultural heritage is closely tied to its communal nature. It refers to practices and traditions whose core lies in knowledge acquired and performed within the framework of a given community.

6 Hafstein, Vladimar Tr.: *Making Intangible Heritage. El Condor Pasa and Other Stories from UNESCO* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018), 27.

However, the role of the community extends beyond the transmission and revitalisation of such heritage; it also includes the regulation and supervision of its continuity. Thus, community members, collectively, determine the forms of innovation that are acceptable, the range of participants, methods of transmission, the rules of performance, and the modes of interpretation involved. This internal governance system ensures that the integrity of the tradition is preserved, even as it evolves over time.⁷

Intangible cultural heritage is best understood as a dynamic process – an ongoing practice through which individuals and communities continuously engage with, recognise, and reinterpret their own cultural expressions. It represents the most immediate and personal connection between a community (or individual) and a cultural phenomenon, as the community and its members themselves serve as the living bearers of the heritage. This is precisely why the development of the 2003 UNESCO Convention was among the most complex and the most debated undertakings in the history of international cultural policy. From its initial proposal to its final adoption, the process spanned three decades and gave rise to numerous conceptual and practical debates. Nevertheless, the Convention has become one of the most widely-embraced UNESCO instruments, both in terms of the number of ratifying states, and the volume of heritage elements inscribed on the Representative List within a relatively short timeframe.

The Convention's underlying philosophy, along with its principles of operation, criteria, and implementation mechanisms – particularly as enacted by the Evaluation Body and the Intergovernmental Committee – places significant emphasis on communities, whether defined as groups or individuals. These operational frameworks explicitly recognise the central role of communities in identifying, maintaining, and transmitting intangible cultural heritage, and they actively encourage community participation in all stages of safeguarding efforts. Notably, however, the Convention and its accompanying Operational Directives refrain from offering a precise definition of 'community', thereby leaving its interpretation open to contextual adaptation.

Among the State Parties, approaches to interpreting intangible cultural heritage, and implementing safeguarding measures, exhibit considerable variation. Similarly, the modalities of involving communities in heritage management reflect a wide

⁷ Csonka-Takács, Eszter: 'Intangible Cultural Heritage Communities in the Network of the Skanzen Hungarian Open Air Museum', *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* 61/2 (2016), 431–439.

diversity – characteristic of the very nature of intangible cultural heritage itself. While the Convention provides a set of guiding principles, recommendations, and responsibilities, it leaves the practical methods of implementation largely to the discretion of each State Party. This flexibility allows for context-sensitive safeguarding strategies, but it also results in differing degrees and forms of community engagement across national contexts.

The role of communities in the implementation of the Convention raises critical questions concerning the objectives pursued by states through their participation in UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) programme. To what extent can involvement in the programme be regarded as a tool for national self-representation, an instrument of the cultural heritage industry, or a resource for the development of cultural tourism? Examination of the international lists established by the Convention – particularly the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity – can provide valuable insights into these issues. Certain tendencies become apparent when analysing the types of heritage elements inscribed. As Keszei observes: 'in terms of heritage context, the scope ranges from small communities, through national and ethnic minorities or regional cultural variants, to elements regarded as part of the national cultural canon'.⁸

A distinctive feature of the Representative List is that nominations must include the free, prior, and informed consent of the communities concerned. This is enshrined in one of the five key criteria for inscription, and must be substantiated in the nomination dossier, through formal declarations and descriptions of the consultation process. A significant reform in recent years has refined this requirement: standardised community consent forms, previously permissible, have been replaced by individually-crafted personal statements that demonstrate the declarant's genuine commitment to the safeguarding of the heritage element. This shift raises complex questions about the feasibility and authenticity of obtaining such consent from an entire nation, or even from all practitioners of a tradition deemed to represent national identity.

In theory, the active relationship between communities and heritage elements is a prerequisite for inscription on the international lists. Indeed, this principle inverts the traditional approach to heritage preservation: rather than identifying 'heritage sites' and subsequently assigning communities to manage them, the process begins

8 Keszei, András: 'A megfoghatatlan nyomában' ('In search of the intangible'), *EFI Communicationes* 16 (2003), 15.

with recognising the communities themselves as the primary custodians of intangible heritage. The heritage element is thus understood, not as an isolated object of preservation, but as being embedded within the living practices of the communities who sustain it.

As such, a critical factor in the implementation of the Convention is the method by which State Parties select heritage elements for nomination. This selection process reflects the broader structure of heritage governance at the national level, including the organisation of relationships with heritage-bearing communities and the strategic orientation of national heritage policy. The extent to which communities are meaningfully involved in the selection and safeguarding process, ultimately influences both the legitimacy and sustainability of the heritage system as a whole.

In several countries, the development of national intangible cultural heritage inventories is overseen by representatives of professional institutions, commissioned by the relevant ministries. These experts – often identical to the members of the national intangible cultural heritage committee – prepare studies that resemble entries in an ethnographic encyclopedia. These studies, not only describe the heritage elements in detail, but also identify the associated communities. It is a common practice for ethnographic and folk-art institutions to serve as primary data sources and providers of background material during this process.

In contrast, some European states have adopted a more direct, community-oriented approach to the implementation of the Convention. In such cases, civil society organisations themselves may act as key actors in safeguarding measures. There are also isolated examples where the widest possible public participation is encouraged – for instance, platforms that allow any individual to submit heritage nominations via online portals, or mechanisms through which communities can directly propose elements representing their own heritage, are provided. However, such inclusive approaches remain the exception rather than the norm in most European states.

The predominant trend is one of official, state-administered governance of intangible heritage, often characterised by a bureaucratic, top-down approach. In many instances, the operational structures lack continuous and meaningful engagement with the communities concerned, as well as with local experts and civil society organisations. This results in a situation wherein heritage is primarily interpreted and defined at the national level, and communities are only subsequently integrated into the process. This inversion reflects the persistence of a heritage-management

model whereby the element is first identified and categorised by institutions, and only then is a community assigned to it or recognised as its bearer.

Such a model, while administratively efficient, risks weakening the foundational principle of the 2003 Convention – namely, that communities are the originators and active agents of intangible cultural heritage. Without a basis of sustained participatory mechanisms, the safeguarding process may lose authenticity and diminish community ownership over the heritage concerned.

The 2003 UNESCO Convention provides an international, legally-binding framework for the identification, safeguarding, and promotion of intangible cultural heritage. Rather than establishing a fixed or exclusive categorisation of heritage elements, the Convention's list of domains serves as a flexible guide for the delineation of broad areas of heritage expression. Within this framework, virtually any phenomenon may be subject to patrimonialisation, provided it is sufficiently codified and contextually validated. Consequently, elements that were once excluded from traditional notions of heritage have, increasingly, become incorporated into heritage discourses. Since 2005, culinary practices and food-related knowledge have also been recognised as legitimate forms of intangible cultural heritage, initiating an ongoing, and often competitive, process among nations to inscribe their gastronomic traditions on UNESCO's Representative List.

CULINARY PRACTICES AS INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

Food heritage encompasses a wide array of knowledge, skills, and practices that communities identify as part of their collective cultural legacy. This includes not only specific dishes, recipes, and ingredients, but also the tools used in food preparation, agricultural methods, and the customs and rituals associated with food production, consumption, and communal dining. The domain of food heritage reflects complex socio-cultural systems and embedded historical narratives, linking everyday culinary practices to broader questions of identity, memory, sustainability, and belonging.

More specifically, food heritage refers to the traditional culinary knowledge, techniques, and food-related customs that are transmitted across generations within a given cultural or regional context. These practices embody not only material elements – such as ingredients or utensils – but also intangible dimensions, such as

symbolism, ritual, and communal meaning. They offer insight into a society's environmental adaptation, its historical experiences, and its social values.

As previously mentioned, cultural heritage does not exist as an autonomous or self-evident entity; it is inherently shaped by processes of social recognition, institutional validation, and political representation. Food heritage, therefore, must be understood as a socially- and an historically-constructed category – one that acquires meaning only through the roles and functions assigned to it within particular cultural, political or economic contexts. It is not an inherent or essential trait of a given food practice that renders it 'heritage', but rather the community's recognition of it as such, often facilitated and formalised by institutional mechanisms.

The first UNESCO Member States to propose their culinary traditions for inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity were primarily those where gastronomy already functioned as a significant component of cultural tourism – particularly in regions associated with the widely-celebrated, albeit often generalised and stereotyped Mediterranean cuisine. Given the novelty of food as a recognised heritage category and the predominantly top-down nature of the nomination process, many of the early culinary nominations – submitted prior to 2010 – were rejected by UNESCO's expert bodies during the evaluation phase. These initial submissions often relied on an essentialist and exceptionalist narrative, framing the proposed food traditions as unique, globally superior, and emblematic of national identity. Such approaches echoed the conceptual framework and evaluative criteria of the 1972 World Heritage Convention – particularly the emphasis on authenticity and outstanding universal value – rather than aligning with the community-centered, processual ethos of the 2003 Convention.⁹

The first food-related nominations that underwent evaluation by UNESCO did, indeed, provoke extensive debates, and exposed several critical tensions within the discourse and operationalisation of intangible cultural heritage. These early cases introduced culinary traditions that had previously remained outside of the purview of formal heritage protection, thereby triggering new conceptual and institutional developments. They also catalysed discussions regarding the appropriate methodologies for assessing intangible gastronomic practices, the politics of representation involved in nomination processes, and the potential

9 Romagnoli: 'Gastronomic heritage elements at UNESCO...', 164

instrumentalisation of food heritage in the service of national branding or economic objectives.

Several gastronomic heritage elements that became focal points of these debates exemplify the complexities and evolving interpretations associated with the heritage-making process. These include:

Mexican Traditional Cuisine (2010): Mexican cuisine was one of the first gastronomic elements to be inscribed on the Representative List. Its inclusion sparked debates about the cultural significance of food, particularly around the question: 'What does it mean to treat a cuisine as heritage?' Mexican cuisine, particularly in a regional context, emphasises food production, the cultivation of corn, chili, and beans, as well as traditional cooking techniques and tools, all of which are part of community practices.

French Gastronomic Meal (2010): The inclusion of the French gastronomic meal on the ICH list also generated considerable debate, as the nomination extended beyond food itself to include the social practices, dining rituals, and traditions associated with meals. French cuisine has long been a key element of the country's cultural identity, and its inclusion can be interpreted as a matter of national pride.

Mediterranean Diet (2010): The nomination of the Mediterranean diet also sparked controversy, as it was jointly submitted by several countries, including Greece, Italy, Spain, and Morocco. The question arose as to what extent a diet could be considered 'heritage', and how regional differences in eating habits could be reconciled under a common international heritage designation. Defining the 'Mediterraneanness' of the diet, and the competition between countries over this representation, also created conflicts.

These early gastronomic nominations highlighted the challenges that the ICH system faced, especially concerning the definition of food heritage and the role of communities in this process. UNESCO had to confront the situation about how to manage the evolution of foods and eating practices, and to determine the cultural significance of specific dishes in an increasingly globalised world. These nominations paved the way for new directions, as gastronomy had, up to then, played a less prominent role in the international cultural protection system then in operation.

These elements not only faced resistance in the earlier phase when they were ultimately not included on the list, but also later on. The nomination dossiers were reviewed during the 5th session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, held in Nairobi in 2010. Upon examining the working documents from the session, it is clear that various concerns and questions were raised, and sharp debates occurred during the discussions.

Here is a quote from the debate on traditional French meals:

‘1. The delegation of Japan sought clarification with regard to the publication of the Michelin Guide, which, since 2008, had been published for restaurants in Japan, with four French restaurants achieving 3-star status, and asked whether these restaurants would be covered by the nominated intangible cultural heritage. The delegation also sought clarification regarding the use of the (UNESCO-ICH) emblem for these types of restaurants.

2. Responding to the question by Japan, the French delegation explained that the text of the French nomination clearly specifies that the community concerned was the entire French population, with the meal being an important aspect of national culture wherever they found themselves. Moreover, the nomination file contained all the information sought by Japan, including the consent of the communities concerned, subscribed by more than 100 organisations or associations.’

Quote from the Mediterranean Diet debate:

“1. Mediterranean diet submitted jointly by Spain, Greece, Italy and Morocco. On behalf of a number of organisations and entities in Crete, a letter was addressed to the Director-General from the President of the Chamber of Commerce of Heraklion [Greece] asserting that there was no dietary culture common to the Mediterranean, which was instead a region of different religions, diverse cultures and varied characteristics. The organisations stated that the idea of a ‘Mediterranean diet’ was a very recent one derived first from medical studies and later promoted by commercial interests. Emphasising that while there were products common to certain parts of the Mediterranean, their cultural meanings were vastly different. The organisations suggested that its inscription would not promote respect for cultural diversity based on equality and mutual respect.

2. Referring to the letter read out by the Secretariat on the Mediterranean diet, the Greek delegation informed the Committee that the letter had been drafted by a private body from Crete and that it had only recently been informed, wishing to know when the letter had arrived at the Secretariat, and why it was not communicated to all Members. The delegation believed that the letter was a product of a misunderstanding as Cretan people were sensitive about keeping

their local diet as intact as possible, and did not wish to be associated with other habits, which in itself proved the active desire to protect their habits that were part of the Mediterranean diet as a whole. Moreover, Cretan people were anxious about the potential commercialisation of food products.”¹⁰

In response to the effects of globalisation, the patrimonialisation of such ‘endangered’ elements of intangible cultural heritage could provide a solution, or at least create a theoretical foundation for this phenomenon. One of the main risks is that countries may propose nomination dossiers related to gastronomy where cultural heritage serves as a nostalgic reminder of the past and local practices, as a mode of contrast to the globalised. Without necessarily intending to do so, states might also foster a kind of gastronomic social awareness, and UNESCO, as a cultural mediator and promoter of universal expression, can function as a shared forum for discussion on this international and communal stage through the 2003 Convention and its Lists.¹¹

The patrimonialisation of gastronomic heritage enhances communities’ self-esteem and serves as a powerful tool for attracting tourists, but above all, it represents activation. While the initiators and proponents of heritage-building processes can indeed be members of civil society, the submission of any ICH element to UNESCO is ultimately carried out by member states, thus making it a process often driven by political goals aimed at enhancing the country’s reputation through the promotion of gastro-diplomacy. Thus, every ICH activation follows a specific process of selection, construction, proposal, and activation, validated through political support.

The text of the 2003 UNESCO Convention did not explicitly mention food heritage or similar terms that would describe this type of heritage. At best, it makes reference to ‘food security,’ as part of the Inclusive social development inherent in the questions of the new nomination form, but the term is not clearly defined within the context of the Convention.

While the feasibility of registering gastronomic cultures with UNESCO has been proven, and UNESCO has acknowledged that food heritage is an expression of cultural identity within communities, it remains difficult to understand which communities are encompassed by the inscribed element, how these social groups practise this intangible cultural expression, and in what ways the inscribed ICH manifests itself. Furthermore, it is unclear how this heritage is renewed and passed on to future generations. How can something be preserved when its definition or

¹⁰ <<https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/ITH-10-5.COM-CONF.202-6-EN.pdf>> accessed 16 April 2025.

¹¹ Romagnoli: ‘Gastronomic heritage elements at UNESCO...’, 167.

boundaries are so vague? From a scientific perspective, further research, fieldwork, and reflection are needed to shed light on this vagueness. Interestingly, from the perspective of communities, we observe how they have begun to identify food in terms of heritage – in the way it is produced and consumed – even if these communities are not necessarily aware of what intangible heritage is or if they are unfamiliar with the patrimonialisation process.

The acceptance of this new category accelerated and encouraged state parties to present their gastronomy to UNESCO, triggering a ‘domino effect’ in the submission of gastronomic nomination dossiers. Today, the gastronomic inscriptions include Japanese *washoku*, Korean *kimchi*, Armenian *lavash*, as well as Arabic and Turkish coffee. Additionally, noteworthy also are the countries aiming to inscribe their national cuisine (such as Peruvian cuisine), or a characteristic national dish (like the French *baguette*), or cross-border foods (for example, couscous proposed by the Maghreb countries).

The heritage element ‘Knowledge of the light rum masters’, submitted by Cuba, sparked a major debate during the 2022 session of the Intergovernmental Committee. According to the Evaluation Body, the submission did not meet 3 out of the 5 necessary criteria required for inscription, and thus, it recommended the referral of the nomination to the submitting state for resubmission in a new procedural period. Questions arose right from the first criterion, which is intended to support the claim that the proposed element does, indeed, constitute intangible cultural heritage.

Quote from the draft decision:

‘R1: ¹² “The element is identified as a cultural expression and identifying factor for the Cuban nation. However, the file focuses on light rum as a product, and there is insufficient explanation on the element’s social functions and cultural meanings. In addition, the file does not provide detailed information about the knowledge and skills associated with the process of making light rum, or about the oral traditions, social practices and knowledge, and practices concerning nature and how they are transmitted from one generation to another. The file explains that the element’s bearers and practitioners are organised in a guild-type community, and that the movement involves five women and nine men from different levels. However, there is limited information about the wider community associated with the element, such

12 R1–R3: Inscription on the Representative List – Criteria: <<https://ich.unesco.org/en/procedure-of-inscription-00809>> accessed 14 April 2025.

as the groups or individuals involved in the production or consumption of the rum. Given the insufficient information on the social functions and cultural meanings of the element, the transmission of the element, and the descriptions of the bearers and practitioners involved, the file does not satisfy criterion R1.

R2: The nomination file indicated that inscription of the element would enhance its visibility at the national and local levels. However, there is insufficient information about how these outcomes will be achieved. The file also explains that the inscription of the element will encourage the diffusion of traditional values of Cuban light rum culture, and also responsible consumption of alcoholic beverages, without detailed elaboration on these aspects.

R3: The file provides brief information on proposed safeguarding measures, without providing detailed descriptions. Various proposed measures appear to promote the light rum as a product, to regulate and control commercial rights concerning light-rum producers, to regulate the rum production process and to restrict access to new producers, also through the establishment of a uniqueness and originality mark. These measures do not focus on safeguarding the viability of the element and its social functions and cultural meanings. Although the element involves the commercial production and sale of light rum, there was no information about how the State Party will monitor possible unintended consequences of the inscription, and mitigate the risks of over-commercialisation. While the file explains that light rum masters were organised into work groups and involved in the implementation of proposed measures, this appears to be a very small community of practitioners and there is insufficient information to determine if the wider community associated with the element has a role in the safeguarding of the element, and how they were involved in the development and implementation of the proposed safeguarding measures.”

Finally, the Committee

“Encourages the State Party, when submitting nomination files in the future, to focus on the social and cultural function of the element and to describe the practice and the technique related to the element, and to avoid placing attention only on the associated product.”

Following a prolonged debate, during which the submitting state had multiple opportunities to speak and to argue intensely in response to the identified shortcomings (the delegation was led by the ambassador of Cuba’s permanent

delegation to UNESCO), the committee ultimately agreed to amend the draft decision in order to include the element on the representative list. The Committee also modified the end of the draft decision as follows, to state that it:

“Encourages the State Party, when safeguarding the element to focus on the social and cultural functions of the element.”¹³

As can be seen, the above-mentioned initial nominations related to food heritage, discuss cuisine, diet, and eating habits, while later on, the focus of the nominations shifts to specific types of food considered characteristic. What remains unchanged is the territorial designation: each gastronomic heritage element continues to be associated with countries or regions. Practically, the food heritage of a local community or a smaller area does not appear on the representative list. This is particularly interesting in light of the list’s other thematic elements. It is very common for a custom, craft tradition, or knowledge related to nature, to be linked to a well-defined locality (specific town, region, or smaller area) or a defined community.

Currently, there are 611 heritage elements on the representative list. If we filter for the term ‘food’ in the search system of the lists, which appears in the nomination file, we find 52 elements on the list. If we further refine the search and look among the keywords, we get the following results: 15 elements are listed under the term ‘food’, 59 under ‘food customs’, 80 are related to ‘food preparation’, 2 are listed under ‘food processing’, and 1 under ‘food production.’¹⁴

It is important to note, that some elements on the Representative List containing the above-mentioned search terms, were not originally inscribed as ‘food heritage’. However, practices such as food preparation or ritual food consumption (e.g., in the context of pastoralism or various folk customs) are part of the heritage practices included in these elements.

The UNESCO ICH Secretariat developed the keyword system because, with support from the Netherlands, they created an interactive interface capable of linking all the heritage elements on the lists through keywords. This allows us to quickly see, for example, which topics are associated with the term ‘food’ and specifically which nominations, countries, and additional keywords are related to it.

13 <<https://ich.unesco.org/en/decisions/17.COM/7.B.5>> accessed 14 April 2025.

14 <<https://ich.unesco.org/en/lists>> accessed 14 April 2025.

The conceptual, visual and interactive navigation made possible through the UNESCO 'Dive into Intangible Cultural Heritage' project, demonstrates the thematic interconnectedness between all the elements inscribed and their relation to nature or to viability threats.

The latest initiative by UNESCO is to produce a food atlas in response to the processes and discussions engaged in so far: "The 'International Food Atlas'¹⁵ and a digital platform to safeguard, promote and transmit foodways to future generations. This project, funded by Saudi Arabia, aims to highlight the diversity of food practices as living heritage and their links to sustainable development, by sharing examples of safeguarding from communities and countries around the world. It should be available by the end of 2026."¹⁶ The purpose of the Atlas is precisely to reinforce the original aim of the Convention: that is, that intangible cultural heritage is not a product, not a commodity, but a cultural expression, a form of communal knowledge and expression.

Concerning the Hungarian practice, we can say that in nearly twenty years since our accession to the Convention in 2006, a system of implementing has emerged in Hungary. A body was established for the handling of the heritage issues and the Ministry commissioned the Hungarian Open Air Museum as a background institution, entrusting it with the coordination of the professional tasks, and, furthermore, a system for the identification, review, and the registration of intangible cultural heritage in Hungary, was launched.

The Hungarian practice has, from the start, striven to follow the philosophy of the Convention concerning the participating communities. The bearer communities, which create, maintain, and mediate their heritage, and recognise it as their own, prepare the nomination documentation themselves, as they seek to have their element inscribed on the Hungarian National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Today, there are 5 food-related heritage elements on the Hungarian National Inventory, all of which belong to larger or smaller local communities.¹⁷ Throughout

15 <<https://ich.unesco.org/en/projects/international-food-atlas-and-digital-platform-for-safeguarding-promoting-and-transmitting-foodways-to-future-generations-00505?projectID=00505>> accessed 14 April 2025.

16 Lucia Iglesias Kuntz (UNESCO):<<https://courier.unesco.org/en/articles/food-and-intangible-heritage-flavourful-relationship>> accessed 14 April 2025.

17 'The Tradition of Kunság Mutton Stew in Karcag, 2009'; 'The Tradition of Miller's Cake in Borsodnádásd, 2012'; 'The Tradition of Plum Jam Making in Szatmár-Bereg, 2013'; 'The Living Tradition of Bajai Fish Soup Preparation, 2021'; 'The Tradition of Growing and Processing Hadházi

the submission process, we engage in extensive consultations with the communities involved, during which it is often necessary to repeatedly emphasise that they should avoid using expressions that imply uniqueness. The Evaluation Body also highlights this same issue year after year in its reports concerning the dossiers submitted for the UNESCO list.¹⁸

GASTRONOMY IN THE HUNGARIKUM SYSTEM

The final version of the Hungarikum Act, defining the existence of national values and Hungarikums in Hungary, was determined in 2012.¹⁹ It is a multi-level, bottom-up system that gradually builds upwards. The definition of national values is as follows:

National values are all intellectual and material, natural, and communal assets or products accumulated and preserved throughout our nation's history and recent past, which are linked to Hungarian creative activities, production culture, knowledge, traditions, landscapes, and wildlife. They hold significant importance from a national perspective and are recognised by our nation – or at least the population of a specific region – as characteristic and well-known elements of Hungarian identity. They significantly enhance our reputation, increase our recognition within the European Union and globally, and contribute to the formation and strengthening of national belonging and Hungarian identity in new generations. In summary, national values encompass tangible and intangible, natural, and communal assets that are of fundamental importance to Hungary. A crucial aspect is that they must be recognised as characteristic and well-known by at least the population of a specific region, ultimately elevating Hungary's international reputation.

The term 'Hungarikum' is conceptually somewhat more specific. The concept and definition of a Hungarikum indicate that it is a special and characteristic Hungarian product. The law defines it as a unique, top-quality achievement representative of Hungary. It is also important that a Hungarikum holds exceptional value for Hungary

Flat Cabbage, 2024': <http://szellemikulturalisorokseg.hu/index0_en.php?name=en_f22_elements> accessed 16 April 2025.

18 Report of the Evaluation Body: 'The use of inappropriate language is a recurring issue with the preparation of nomination files. Offences include the use of words such as *originality*, *authenticity*, *unique*, *alien*, or *purity* that may imply the freezing of an element; or the use of statements that suggest exclusivity or ownership of an element. These types of language and statements are not consistent with the spirit of the Convention and should not be included in the drafting of nomination files.'

19 2012. évi XXX. törvény magyar nemzeti értékekről és a hungarikumokról <<https://www.hungarikum.hu>> accessed 16 April 2025.

and is internationally recognised as a distinctive Hungarian attribute. The Hungarian Hungarikum Committee puts it this way: ‘when foreigners see a Hungarikum, they should immediately associate it with Hungary’. During the process of preparing this law, in which I was involved, a Hungaricum was also described as ‘Hungary’s showcase’. What would we put in Hungary’s showcase?

This perspective should also apply when considering gastronomic Hungarikums. Within the Hungarikum system, value repositories have been established. The process starts at the local level, making it a movement where everyone can pay attention to their own values, collect what they find significant, and make these values visible by creating value repositories and submitting them for listing. There are municipal and county-level value repositories, and Hungarian value repository committees have also been established beyond Hungary’s borders.

The Hungarian Value Repository and the Hungarikum lists are collections where these values are gathered. The Hungarikum pyramid illustrates how this system is structured. Items can only be proposed from the bottom up. If something is to become a Hungarikum, it must first be included in a local, sectoral, or cross-border value repository, and then progress, step by step, through the hierarchy. Various committees have been established at each level, each with its own responsibilities.

After its first meeting, the main Hungarikum Committee saw the necessity for the formation of specialised subcommittees, as the issue of Hungarikums and Hungarian values covers a vast array of topics. It is essential to involve experts to evaluate the incoming nominations, which span a wide range of national values. A crucial criterion is that anyone can submit a nomination – there is no requirement for affiliation with a community or a direct connection to the proposed value. This differs from the process of researching intangible cultural heritage. Here, anyone can submit anything they consider important from the perspective of the national value repository or the municipal value repository. These committees are structured hierarchically, and nominations move upwards through the different levels. The final decision is always formally made by the Ministry of Agriculture. Once an item is added to the Hungarikum list, it receives permission to use a trademarked logo as a certification. From that point on, Hungarikums can use this trademarked logo as a symbol of recognition.

I examined the Hungarikum list available on the Hungarikum Committee’s website to identify elements specifically related to gastronomy. This list is quite insightful and

it includes items such as Csabai sausage, Gyulai sausage, Kalocsa spice paprika, Herz salami (associated with Szeged), Hungarian acacia honey (primarily harvested from the acacia forests of the Great Hungarian Plain), Makó onion, Debreceni double sausage, Szeged spice paprika, and Szentes paprika. The Pick winter salami, a factory-made product, is also linked to Szeged. These items are part of the Hungarikum Collection under the category of agriculture and the food industry.²⁰

There is another category dedicated to tourism and hospitality, which includes elements that are significant for Hungary's hospitality sector and tourism – whether as events or culinary experiences. Unlike the previous category, this one does not focus on raw products but rather on processed foods. The first dish added to the Hungarikum list in this category was Karcag-style mutton stew, followed by Baja-style fish soup, then Tisza-style fish soup, and finally, Hungarian goulash.

We can see that these gastronomic elements have become iconic and emblematic. They represent traditions that are essentially culinary traditions. Once part of everyday life in Hungary, they have, through various processes, risen to prominence and become symbols. This is a fascinating transformation demonstrating that local traditions can evolve into national symbols and eventually gain global recognition.

Hungarikums are precisely those Hungarian values that are internationally recognised and intrinsically associated with Hungary. They symbolise Hungarian identity, demonstrating how something rooted in local culture can acquire global significance. Gastronomy, in this sense, can serve as a national symbol.

CONCLUSION

In general, both in Hungary and abroad, we see that countries are most often identified by their food – it is the first thing about a country that comes to mind. Food is also the most accessible cultural element, whether we travel to a country or experience it wherever we are. It is interesting to note that gastronomy and cuisine are among the most effective ways of making a culture or country widely known. This is exemplified by the UNESCO list itself, where an increasing number of national gastronomic specialties are being recognised.

20 Csonka-Takács, Eszter: 'Gasztronómiai örökségünk az Alföldön' ('Gastronomic heritage in the Great Plain'), in Silling, Léda ed.: *Az alföld. Petőfi 200* (Szabadka: Szekeres László Foundation, 2024), 243–253.

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PART I:

DEALING WITH FOOD IN
INSTITUTIONS AND
ORGANISATIONS WORKING
WITH CULTURAL HERITAGE I



ZSUZSA SZARVAS

FROM FIREPLACE TO TABLE: THE HERITAGE OF THE MUSEUM OF ETHNOGRAPHY'S FOOD COLLECTION

ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to answer the question whether, and if so, to what extent, the Museum of Ethnography's food collection represents Hungarian peasant food culture, for which it was created to preserve. The backbone of the collection is formed of objects related to 'archaic' cooking processes. Thus, one finds here not only the usual utensils for cooking and baking, but also implements used around the fire. Among groups of objects organised by function, the foremost are those for food preparation, storage, and consumption. But, to what extent are they suitable for the study of food tradition/heritage?

COLLECTION STRUCTURE OF THE MUSEUM OF ETHNOGRAPHY

The object collection of the Museum of Ethnography¹ was formed according to the categories defined by ethnography and material culture research at the beginning of 20th century.² In accordance with the Museum's collection profile, the Hungarian and international material was divided into different sections, and within these broad categories thematic collections were formed, and these are still in existence today.

1 Reference to this study: Zsuzsa Szarvas: From Fireplace to Table: The Heritage of the Museum of Ethnography's Food Collection. In Anikó Bádi and Patricia Lysaght (eds.): *Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage*. Budapest: ELTE RCH Institute of Ethnology – Museum of Ethnography, 2025. pp. 119–134.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61380/978-963-567-084-0-5>

2 Bátky, Zsigmond – Györffy, István and Viski, Károly eds.: *A magyarság néprajza I. Tárgyi néprajz* ('Ethnography of Hungarians I. Material Culture') (Budapest: Egyetemi, 1933).

Historically, the collections that encompass the Museum's Carpathian Basin material have been divided into units variously by material type (textile, ceramic) or theme, while regional collections have been organised by continent. With regard to the collection as a whole, though the greater part focuses on material culture as represented by handicrafts dating to between 1850 and 1950, objects representing contemporary lifestyles have also, over time, appeared with increasing frequency in the collection, accompanied by a growing shift in emphasis from the objects themselves towards the stories associated with them.

Included in the Hungarian material, the collection dealing with traditional forms of *farming and food procurement* (fishing, animal husbandry, pastoralism, crop cultivation, food gathering) includes several tens of thousands of tools and decorative objects representing a pre-mechanised rural lifestyle. The 'Crafts and Trades' unit of the *Technology Collection* features tools and equipment associated with various guilds and cottage industries. Other topics important in the history of technology are those represented by the Transportation Collection, comprising objects associated with the movement of people and goods and the transmission of news and other signals, while the Construction Collection, preserves all manner of objects associated with building processes. The largest unit of the collection of *household* articles (comprising a total of some 30,000 artefacts) is the Ceramics Collection, which preserves various products of the folk potter's craft. In the Furniture and Lighting Collection are gathered a variety of articles used to furnish, illuminate, and decorate homes and primarily reference the Hungarian population, but also including other regional nationalities. A third grouping, the Food and Nutrition Collection, houses the accessories used for storing, processing, and conserving food, along with a miscellany of other household items not categorisable elsewhere. Forming yet another separate unit is the 50,000-piece *Textile and Costume Collection*, regarded as one of the finest thematic assemblages in Europe. This includes folk costumes and household textiles, variously decorated in an extraordinary range of motifs and colours. Beyond items associated with rural peoples, pastoralists, and artisans, are those belonging to the material culture of the ordinary people in a broader sense, including the urban bourgeoisie and intelligentsia. Falling under the heading of *Folk Rituals* are the Ecclesiastical Collection, containing objects related to religious life, and the Collection of Folk Customs and Toys, containing objects related to everyday and festival events. A third grouping, the Musical Instrument Collection, preserves a wide range of folk musical instruments. Covering parts of the world beyond Hungary – Africa, Asia,

Oceania, Indonesia, Europe, and the Americas – are the Museum's *Regional Collections*.³

WHAT IS THE FOOD COLLECTION?

When museum experts organise a body of artefacts into official collections, categories are defined based on the materials of which they are fashioned and the functions that they serve. In this context, the Food Collection may be seen as an odd assemblage of the leftovers of this process, since it comprises food processing, serving, and conservation artifacts, as well as storage items made of materials not included in any other collection.

It thus contains no ceramics or textiles, since artefacts made of these materials have each been placed in a separate collection. At the same time, because it is often difficult to delineate between various groups of objects on the basis of functionality, many items clearly related to food and diet have also been placed in other collections. What can be said of the artefacts in the Food Collection, however, is that they are all related to the traditional food culture of the various religious, ethnic, and social groups living in Hungarian-speaking territories.

The backbone of the collection is formed of objects related to 'archaic' cooking processes. These are mainly tools for open fireplaces (iron stands, fire dogs, bells, kettles, etc.), typically from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Thus, one finds not only the usual utensils for cooking and baking for the periods in question, but also implements used around the fire. Among groups of objects organised by function, the foremost are those used for food preparation, storage, and consumption. In terms of materials, the collection includes objects made of metal or wood, from simple wooden implements, to cups, plates, and other table-setting items made of tin, indicating the presence of a developed metallurgical industry in the 19th century.

3 Fejős, Zoltán ed.: *A Néprajzi Múzeum gyűjteményei* ('Collections of the Museum of Ethnography') (Budapest: Néprajzi Múzeum, 2000).

HISTORY OF THE COLLECTION AND ITS CONNECTION TO ETHNOLOGICAL FOOD RESEARCH

In the history of ethnological research, János Jankó (1868–1902) was the first Hungarian to include food among his research interests. The main focus of his collecting was the documentation of typical elements of a regional culture in architecture and domestic furnishings, including food-related objects. His work testifies to the fact that he did not consider the study of food itself as a subject to be researched in the context of material culture. This is surprising, because it was the role of kitchen utensils within the theme of domestic furnishings that had attracted his attention. It was in his monographs, as part of chapters on customs, that he discussed everyday eating habits under the headings of nutrition and feasting, without, however, linking them to material culture. These short chapters in his published work organically connect the subject of food to lifestyle as a whole, but not to material culture.⁴

In 1902, János Jankó was commissioned to write a guide for the organisation of collections of ethnographic museums, but his untimely death meant that the task was taken over by Zsigmond Bátky (1874–1939), a renowned researcher of folk architecture and fireplaces. Jankó had originally intended to carry out the task by drawing typical objects from the ethnographic sections of the existing ethnographic department of the National Museum, and then providing collectors with a brief description of the objects. Jankó also wanted to lay the foundations for a future typology of objects, which his successor considered premature due to the shortcomings of the collection.

Bátky's approach to food research was also shaped by his evolutionary perspective and his background in geography. In his view, cultural differences represented stages of development, and this could be demonstrated through the analysis of material culture. Recognising the importance of historical change, he saw as the future of ethnographic museums their transformation into cultural history collections. His guide, while detailing the conditions for effective collecting, does not set out coherent systems of objects, but rather the importance of the series needed to chart developmental processes. From the presentation of specifically *kitchen utensils*,

4 Jankó, János: *Kalotaszeg magyar népe* ('The Hungarian People of Kalotaszeg') (Budapest: Atheneum, 1892); Jankó, János: *Torda, Aranyosszék, Torockó magyar (székely) népe. Néprajzi tanulmány* ('The Hungarian (Szekler) People of Torda, Aranyosszék, Torockó. Ethnographic Study') (Budapest: Fritz, 1893); Jankó, János: *A Balaton-melléki lakosság néprajza* ('The Ethnography of the Balaton-mellék Population') (Budapest: Hornyánszky, 1902).

Bátky logically derived the system of food objects from the construction. Essentially, he saw such objects as accessories to the fireplace. He considered the most important group of kitchen utensils to be those providing the means of heating and feeding the fire. The guide's classification also laid the groundwork, albeit covertly, for later classification systems: in addition to the tools of the fireplace, it shows utensils for cooking, storage (with those for storing cooking utensils specially emphasised), and consumption, including tableware.⁵ He continued in this vein in the chapter on food in his basic ethnographic work, *The Ethnography of the Hungarians*, elaborating on and detailing the presentation of the system of object groups, but this lacks comparative thinking and the search for a link with food culture.⁶

In his article on ethnographic museology, László K. Kovács (1908–2012), in the section relating to food, suggested the following thematic order for the arrangement of the objects relating to food in the Ethnographic Museum's collection:

1. food (preparation, preservation, consumption, festive and ritual meals, food in times of scarcity)
2. drinks (subdivided as in food)
3. spices (groups of vegetable, animal and mineral origin)
4. cooking utensils
5. serving and eating
6. pot holders

Finally, in 1966, Judit Morvay's (1923–2002) guide identified the groups of objects that form the basis of today's classification in relation to folk nutrition Ethnographic Museum's collection.⁷

The most important results of food research in Hungary are summarised in the Hungarian Ethnography series – in the *Lifestyle* volume by Eszter Kisbán, which

5 Bátky, Zsigmond: *Útmutató a néprajzi múzeumok szervezéséhez* ('A Guide to Organizing Ethnographic Museums') (Budapest: Hornyánszky, 1906).

6 Bátky, Zsigmond: 'Táplálkozás' ('Nutrition'), in Bátky, Zsigmond – Györffy, István and Viski, Károly eds.: *A magyarság néprajza I. Tárgyi néprajz* ('Ethnography of Hungarians 1. Material Culture') (Budapest: Egyetemi, 1933), 37–123.

7 Morvay, Judit: *Népi táplálkozás* ('Folk Nutrition') (Budapest: Néprajzi Múzeum, 1962).

deals with the processes of cultural change based on the interaction between elite and peasant society. This historical tableau, based on demography, food statistics, price lists, various travel accounts, and other historical sources, shows the consistent social processes behind the changes in food culture.⁸ What is missing, however, are the lessons that can be drawn from the objects connected with food. This is because collections of this type (such as the food collection of the Museum of Ethnography) have little to say about questions of periodisation, the material culture of the bourgeoisie or the elite, the problem of the landscape structures of culture, or even the phenomena of table etiquette in general. It is thus clear that the Museum of Ethnography's food collection, by its very nature, offers little in the way of contributions to food studies.

Currently the objects in the food collection in the Museum of Ethnography are arranged according to the following scheme:

1. Preparation

Preparing the raw material

Tools for cleaning (knife, sieve, grater)

Tools for crushing (mortar, pestle and mortar, potato crusher, nut crusher, coffee grinder)

Tools for cutting (knife and pine knife, meat cleaver, meat slicer, pasta cutter, cabbage cutter, cabbage slicer, chaff cutter)

Tools for chopping and grating (grater, slicer, leather grater)

Food preparation

Drying (baskets)

Smoking (hooks, gamos, smoking sticks)

Acidification (barrel, cabbage stone)

Kneading (tub and foot for tub, wooden bowl, sourdough wood, sourdough mixer,)

Stretching (stretching board, stretching staff)

Cutting, slicing (cutting board)

Shaking (slicer, pasta shaper, pasta cutter)

Stuffing (sausage and sausage stuffers)

Pressing (cheese press, vinegar press)

Shaking (spatula)

Fire tools (fire scrapers, fire shovels, embers catchers)

8 Kisbán, Eszter: Táplálkozáskultúra ('Food culture'), in Balassa, Iván ed.: *Életmód*. 4. Anyagi kultúra ('Lifestyle 4. Material Culture') (Budapest, Akadémiai, 1997), 417–583.

Baking

Utensils for open fire (spit, grill, horn grill)

Utensils (pot, pan, pancake griddle, frying pan, coffee roaster)

Lids (baking bell, lids)

Moulds (baking moulds, waffle irons)

Rotators (baking forks)

Holders (iron tripods, fire dogs)

Cooking

Pots (pots, pans, frying pans, kettles, cauldrons)

Lids

Holders (tripod, casserole holder, grill holder, casserole dish, pot holder)

Mixers (mixing bowl, mortar)

Strainers (colander, slotted spoon)

2. Consumption

Serving (saucer, bowl, ladle, tray, grass holder, jug)

Tableware (plate, bowl, cutlery, cup, glass, pipe, pipe flask)

3. Means of storage

Equipment for storing raw materials (fat, butter, fruit, sugar, curd, cheese, salt, spices, flour, meat, bacon, sausage and milk).

Food storage equipment (bread holders: grids, bowls, baskets, pickle holders, tobacco holders, water holders: basins, buckets, bowls, pails, spouts).

Storage tools for kitchen utensils (spoon holders, knives, match holders)

4. Accessories

Measuring instruments

Flour mill

Scales

Wooden spoon

Liquid level measurer

Dipping bowls⁹

⁹ Rékai, Miklós: 'Táplálkozásgyűjtemény' ('Food Collection'), in Fejős, Zoltán ed.: *A Néprajzi Múzeum gyűjteményei* ('Collections of the Museum of Ethnography') (Budapest: Néprajzi Múzeum, 2000), 299–316.



Fig. 1. Fire dogs in the Food Collection, Museum of Ethnography, Budapest. (Photo by Edit Garai, 2024)



Fig. 2. Baking bells in the Food Collection, Museum of Ethnography, Budapest. (Photo by Edit Garai, 2024)



Fig. 3. Meat cleavers in the Food Collection, Museum of Ethnography, Budapest. (Photo by Edit Garai, 2024)



Fig. 4. Drinking bowls in the Food Collection, Museum of Ethnography, Budapest. (Photo by Edit Garai, 2024)

Thus, the food collection, in terms of its scheme has the main characteristics of how the other collections of the Museum of Ethnography are arranged, with the ‘peculiarity’ of its being partly a remnant collection. Its foundations were there from the beginning, but the many reorganisations and restructurings that the collection has undergone over the years have brought in some objects that are not connected to food – for example, tools for cleaning, and personal hygiene, and a number of other unrelated objects. Thus, the food collection’s existing shortcomings, its black holes, so to speak, do not currently allow it to be regarded as a real source base for various studies on peasant food culture.

The composition of the collection is not really suitable for contemporary research either. Despite the presence of contemporary objects, there is no coherent concept of collecting and assembling behind them.

This is not to say, of course, that the objects in the food collection cannot serve as a basis for object biographies or the study of a particular group of objects in connection with food culture. The new Collection Exhibition of the Museum of Ethnography provides good examples of using the artefacts of the food collection in order to present life stories of different objects. Here two such objects are considered – a pan for *challah*-making and a pressure cooker.¹⁰

THE PAN FOR MAKING CHALLAH

The pan for making *challah* or braided egg bread, is an indispensable tool in a traditional Jewish household, as it is used every week to prepare for one of the most important celebrations, the Sabbath. At the time of its acquisition by the Museum of Ethnography, its owner was around sixty years old. She had been through the hell of the Auschwitz concentration camp, and had continued her observant Jewish life after returning to her hometown, Munkács.

Between 1991 and 1994, ethnographer Miklós Rékai conducted ethnographical fieldwork in the city of Munkács in the Eastern Carpathian Foothills, among the remaining members of the once-flourishing Jewish community that lived there. In one of the households included in the research, two identical diamond-shaped pans were used for baking the *challah/berkhes* (egg bread) for the Sabbath. The owner

¹⁰ The life stories of these two objects were studied by Krisztina Sedlmayr for the Collection Exhibition of the Museum of Ethnography.



Fig. 5. The pan for making challah in the Collection Exhibition, Museum of Ethnography, Budapest. (Photo by Marcell Szász, 2024)

donated one of them to the museum, keeping the other, and shared her life story and her knowledge of the traditions of her community with the researcher.

The pan was made in the 1930s. The informant's aunt – Auntie Hencsi – had always used this pan for making *challah*. Its shape is unique to the Munkács region and is similar to the specimen pictured in the *Magyar néprajzi atlasz* ('Hungarian Atlas of Ethnography').¹¹ She had been running a household since the 1950s, and she had inherited the pan from someone else. The family may have bought it originally from itinerant Gypsy craftspeople. At the time of the acquisition, she no longer baked *challah* for each Sabbath, but earlier she had used the pan weekly for this purpose for decades: 'Today you can buy really good *challah* in the store, too,' Jewish housewives told the researchers.

The last *challah*-bake in which the pan donated to the Museum was used, was documented by the ethnographer and his photographer companions. The photo series shows the kneading of the dough, the ritual separation of the dough offering, or the *taking of the challah*, the braiding, rising, and the baked bread. Not long after the acquisition, Auntie Hencsi and her husband left Munkács and emigrated to Israel, to the city of Petah Tikva, where many Hungarian Jews had settled.

In the preface to his book, Miklós Rékai explains why the life of the Jewish community of Munkács was an exciting field of inquiry for him. He states: 'As I was connecting with the community as an ethnographer, I was mostly interested in how the set of religious rules of Jewish life contributed to maintaining the group's identity in the face of circumstances that had fundamentally changed [...] this report on contemporary Munkács focuses primarily on the rules and realities of dining.'¹²

PRESSURE COOKER

Helping working women in the household

It does not happen too often that we know the exact date of a mass-produced object. According to its well-preserved user manual, the pressure cooker, or 'speed cooker',

11 Barabás, Jenő ed.: *Magyar Néprajzi Atlasz* ('Hungarian Atlas of Ethnography'), 4. kötet (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1989), 40.

12 Rékai, Miklós: *A munkácsi zsidók 'terített asztala'* ('The laid table of the Jews of Munkács') (Budapest: Osiris, 1997), 7–8.

in question, was made in the Budapest Aluminium Factory in 1958. The pot has a 4-litre capacity, its seal is functional, and cooks or steams food under 2 bars of pressure. The new object type thus assists its user by shortening the time spent on household labour. Its first owner was given the pressure cooker for Christmas in 1958. The grandmother did a lot of good cooking for her family, and her adult children bought the pressure cooker for her at the houseware store located on the ground floor of their apartment building, in the hope that it would make feeding the family of nine somewhat easier for her.

The accomplished housewife, who grew up in Brassó (today: Braşov, Romania) approached the new utensil with some distrust. It was first tested after the Christmas holidays. However, the traditional chicken soup shot out from the overfilled pot through the safety valve and covered the kitchen's surfaces, while the soup in the pot remained cloudy. Grandma never used the pot again.

The gift was set aside until it was passed down to her daughter. As a working woman, with little spare time, she greatly enjoyed using the pot and it got plenty of use until 1979. She cooked in their apartment on Váci Road, even on weekdays, for her husband's sake, who only ate home-cooked food. From the 1960s and 1970s, a number of new tools, appliances, and services, were available to make housework less onerous for the housewife.

The pressure cooker shortened the time it took to prepare foods requiring lengthy simmering, such as beef stews, stuffed meats, game, pig trotters, smoked pork knuckles, smoked ribs, tripe, beans, and lentils. The second owner typically used it to steam meats, but it was also great for cooking the family's favourite fresh corn-on-the-cob dish in mere minutes.

The third owner has been running a household since the early 1980s. She was given the pressure cooker when the family who used it moved to a new home. She found it very useful as previously she had only a smaller pressure cooker with a two-litre capacity, which she received as a wedding gift. The family history of grandmother's overfilled pressure cooker was inadvertently re-enacted with a pot of pig trotters' stew in 1983, leaving indelible marks on the walls of the apartment's kitchen. After that incident, the third owner's husband soldered the pot's valve shut.

She kept using the pressure cooker for another twenty years, into the early 2000s, when it was taken from their Budapest home to the family's weekend cabin on the



Fig. 6. The pressure cooker in the Collection Exhibition, Museum of Ethnography, Budapest.
(Photo by Marcell Szász, 2024)

banks of the Danube river near Ráckeve. Then her daughter, representing the fourth generation of home cooks, began cooking in it. At the same time, both their households were equipped with newer types of pressure cookers.

The family history of the pressure cooker being passed down between four generations of women associated with the object is conveyed by Ildikó Pirok's detailed and engaging writing. Her narrative details how the new object type was first met with distrust, the initial mishaps around its use, and its later acceptance, its usefulness, its 'golden age', and finally, its retirement. The backdrop to this story is the changing role of women during the 20th century, the challenges of finding a balance between working outside the home and running a household, all presented in a charmingly cheerful manner. It is this story that makes this pot special among the functional objects in the museum. The household item, popular for several decades, now represents the study of everyday urban life of the recent past as a new field of research in ethnography in the Collection Exhibition.

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MELANIJA BELAJ

FACES OF HUNGER. AN EXHIBITION ABOUT (THE LACK OF) FOOD IN THE ETHNOGRAPHIC MUSEUM, ZAGREB

THOUGHTS ON DIFFICULT HERITAGE AND AFFECTIVE
CURATORSHIP

ABSTRACT

The article reflects on certain important elements related to the creation of an exhibition at the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb, starting from the research process to the exhibition setup and guided tours, which are based on the concept of 'difficult topics' in museum practice, as well as on insights from the *affective turn* in museums during past few decades.

INTRODUCTION

The *Faces of Hunger* exhibition (2022–2023) resulted from collaboration between the Ethnographic Museum and Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, Zagreb, and specifically between two ethnologists who had conducted research on food over many years – Tanja Kocković Zaborski and Melanija Belaj, respectively.¹

At a time when global strategies are being devised to combat and eradicate hunger, the aim of this exhibition was to raise awareness of hunger, especially imposed

1 Reference to this study: Melanija Belaj: *Faces of Hunger*. An Exhibition about (the Lack of) Food in the Ethnographic Museum, Zagreb: Thoughts on Difficult Heritage and Affective Curatorship. In Anikó Báti and Patricia Lysaght (eds.): *Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage*. Budapest: ELTE RCH Institute of Ethnology – Museum of Ethnography, 2025. pp. 135–146.

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hunger, but also self-imposed hunger.² The exhibition not only showed the theme of hunger throughout history, but also emphasised specifically the struggle against hunger in today's society. While primarily focusing on Croatia, the exhibition also presented the topic within the broader context of global hunger.

We have become more aware of hunger as a reality during times of crisis that have recently affected the world – the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns, earthquakes affecting Zagreb itself and the towns of Petrinja, Sisak, and Glina, in Croatia, as well as those that occurred in Turkey and Syria, and, finally, the wildfires and floods that broke out across Europe. Ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East keep reshaping the world's economic landscape, affecting the distribution and availability of food, and leading eventually to shortages, poverty, and – hunger. We came across many issues in the course of our research of the phenomenon of hunger, but decided to highlight just a few of these in this exhibition – specifically the matters that we raised in our conversations with our informants during our research, which effectively articulated multiple issues associated with hunger. By means of these, the exhibition as a whole would be able to establish good communication with audiences, enabling us to tell the story that hunger shows both a dark and a bright side of human nature and reality.

In the exhibition, and consequently in the exhibition catalogue also, the topic of hunger was approached, both conceptually and visually, in three different ways. Thus, the extensive material which had been collected, was divided into three main sections or themes.³ The largest section formed the part of the exhibition called 'The Fight against Hunger', which discussed how, throughout history, people have fought, and many still fight today, against hunger. A part of this section of the exhibition was dedicated to recent events in earthquake-affected areas, and to life during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown in Croatia. In the second section of the exhibition – 'Hunger as a Political Tool' – we depicted the use of hunger for political purposes. Examples of this from both global and national history clearly showed that hunger has been, and still is, used as a means of both mass and individual manipulation, resistance, power display, conflict initiation, and killing. In the third section of the exhibition – 'Hunger and Our Body' – the focus was on the relationship between

2 Some parts of this paper are incorporated into the text: Belaj, Melanija: 'It's Either a Struggle or It's Fear – A Reflection on the Co-Author's Involvement in the Exhibition Faces of Hunger', *Etnološka istraživanja* 29 (2024), 240–254.

3 Belaj, Melanija: 'Uvod' ('Introduction'), in Kocković Zaborski, Tanja ed.: *Lica gladi* ('Faces of Hunger') exhibition catalogue (Zagreb: Etnografski muzej and Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku, 2023), 1–5.

hunger and the body – which apparently is becoming increasingly distorted in today's consumerist world – and the issue of self-imposed starvation. Thus, through uncontrolled fasting and dieting, eating disorders are increasingly developing, even among younger populations.⁴

THE LEGACY OF HUNGER

Hunger, as the main theme of the exhibition, was a very challenging topic to develop for presentation to a museum audience. This is because hunger should not be addressed only as a biological condition, but also as a cultural and social fact, thus necessitating discussion and engagement with several academic disciplines in today's world. As I mentioned in the 'Introduction' to the exhibition catalogue, hunger has been, and also remains, one of the driving forces of human progress – in the development of cities and social life, in the economy, and especially in agriculture, for example. Hunger compels us to think about the future, about the need to build up stocks and about the preservation of seeds. The history of human food consumption has been profoundly shaped and managed by sustained periods of hunger.⁵ The experience of hunger – more so than that of food abundance – has defined human history. The agony of hunger has pursued humanity from its very beginnings, and the reasons for its occurrence are diverse – ranging, for example, from climate change, adverse weather conditions and natural disasters, to various social, political, and economic upheavals. Hunger is intertwined with all aspects of life, and it can be approached from entirely different perspectives and scientific disciplines, such as, for example, medicine, archaeology, history, social work, nutrition, gastronomy, ecology, agronomy, sociology, economics, botany, mythology, psychology, ethnology, and cultural anthropology.⁶ This is also confirmed in the reflections of two authors, Marguérite Corporaal and Ingrid de Zwart, who, in their article, 'Heritages of Hunger: European Famine Legacies in Current Academic Debates', explore the legacy of hunger in Europe, analysing how historical famines shaped contemporary academic discussions and museum practices that deal with the theme of hunger.⁷ In their aforementioned article, the authors highlight the need for a multidisciplinary approach to the study of hunger, thereby combining historical,

4 Belaj: 'Uvod' ('Introduction'), 1.

5 Belaj: 'Uvod' ('Introduction'), 1–5.

6 Belaj: 'Uvod' ('Introduction'), 3.

7 Corporaal, Marguérite and de Zwart, Ingrid: 'Heritages of Hunger. European Famine Legacies in Current Academic Debates', *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 28/1 (2021), 30–43.

sociological, cultural, and economic perspectives, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of a complex phenomenon – something that I myself was aware of at an early stage in the course of my own deliberations on, and possible approaches to, the topic of hunger. During our research for the exhibition, many complex topics emerged, requiring further discussion, in-depth treatment, and representation. Corporaal and de Zwarte also point out that various episodes of hunger, such as the Great Famine in Ireland (1845–1849) and the Holodomor famine in Ukraine (1932–1933), left lasting effects on social, political, and cultural structures in European countries. They also comment on the ways in which these events were interpreted in museum practices, emphasising the importance of understanding historical famines, not only as past events, but also – and I might add, to an even greater extent – as dynamic factors potentially influencing present and future European societies.⁸ The intertwining of the exhibition creators' perception of hunger in the setting up of the exhibition, with the ways in which hunger aspects were historically accepted by potential audiences, necessarily affected the presentation of the theme, or specific aspects of it, within the exhibition. During our research and exploration of hunger throughout world history, the abovementioned periods of the Great Famine in Ireland and the Holodomor famine in Ukraine, emerged as significant 'moments', which warranted the dedication of an exclusive section of the exhibition to them. Just when we were working on the Holodomor aspect of the exhibition, war broke out in Ukraine, instantly altering the lives of so many people and gradually affecting the economic landscape of both Europe and the world. It was crucial, therefore, that we should consider carefully how to approach this matter in the exhibition. As Corporaal and de Zwarte note, presenting hunger in museums brings into focus a series of challenges because it is difficult to depict suffering and tragedy in a way that is sensitive both to the victims and to their descendants, but also informative and engaging for audiences. Reflecting on the perception, and the contemporary relevance, of hunger, both in academic discussions and in museum practice, the authors give special attention to the link between the memory of hunger-periods and the creation of heritage around them. They also point out that, in these processes, heritage can be seen as a 'place where memory is embodied'⁹ in selective ways, according to the 'demands of the present', or the

8 Corporaal and de Zwarte: 'Heritages of Hunger. European Famine Legacies in Current Academic Debates', 30–43.

9 Apaydin, Veyssel: *Critical Perspectives on Cultural Memory and Heritage. Construction, Transformation and Destruction* (London: UCL Press, 2020).

'imagined future'.¹⁰ Corporaal and de Zwarte further observe that we can simultaneously witness the interaction between the construction of heritage and the dynamics of cultural memory (and forgetting). This is because the collective memory of a culturally active community can also serve as an incentive to create new heritage, such as monuments, commemorative rituals, and museum collections, or to preserve material and intangible artifacts and practices.¹¹ The authors very aptly identify potential problems in conveying and representing hunger, within a specific historical context, to today's audience, by emphasising that the social use and relevance, today, of past experiences of hunger, depend on how this particular heritage is transmitted. It is important, during this transmission process, therefore, to bridge a potential gap between the heritage that is remembered and today's perceptions of it by museum visitors. This is especially true when trying to evoke empathy in a contemporary audience, which often has, as the authors point out, a 'different cultural background'.¹²

During the preparation of the exhibition, it was crucial, therefore, to tackle these challenges and to avoid an inherent risk – that of sensationalism or trivialisation – while considering, interpreting, and presenting inherently difficult and painful topics for prospective audiences. At the same time, however, we needed to ensure that we did not succumb to the 'brutalization of the viewer', to the 'normalization of atrocity', or to the 'sanitisation' of topics – such as Silke Arnold-de Simine highlights in her study of the boundaries of affect in museums.¹³ During our research, we visited a Croatian concentration camp (1941–1945) memorial location – the Jasenovac Memorial Site¹⁴ – initially in search of the cookbook by an inmate, Andela Heder¹⁵ – but also seeking any other possible exhibits or stories that we could

10 Ashworth, Gregory John and Graham, Brian. J.: *Senses of Place, Senses of Time. Heritage, Culture, and Identity* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2005), 4.

11 Corporaal and de Zwarte: 'Heritages of Hunger. European Famine Legacies in Current Academic Debates', 31.

12 Corporaal and de Zwarte: 'Heritages of Hunger. European Famine Legacies in Current Academic Debates', 41.

13 Arnold de-Simine, Silke: *Mediating Memory in the Museum. Trauma, Empathy, Nostalgia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013), 46.

14 Jasenovac Memorial Site is in the immediate vicinity of the former Jasenovac concentration camp, Camp III (Brickworks). The activities of Jasenovac Memorial Site have developed in different directions and include compiling, researching, scientifically processing, preserving and exhibiting the museum buildings and documents on how the Jasenovac Ustasha camp system operated; an educational programme; organising exhibitions and publications; ongoing co-operation with surviving prisoners and organising commemorative events in honour of the Jasenovac victims <<https://www.jusp-jasenovac.hr/Default.aspx?sid=6468>> accessed 20 November 2024.

15 During January 1942, in the Jasenovac concentration camp, prisoner Andela Heder captured some recipes in her notebook. After a full day of exhausting work, prisoners would talk about the types of

present in the exhibition. Through conversations with colleagues and by reviewing the materials we had prepared, we came across many horrifying facts, and profoundly sad fates and life stories, in this context. After going through archival materials, published documents, and gaining insight into the complex, destructive, sorrowful, and dense history linked to the Jasenovac Memorial Site, we had to consider carefully what to display in the exhibition and how to carry it out, without falling into potential traps mentioned by certain authors when it comes to eliciting empathy in museum audiences. There is a risk, by following the principle of ‘mediated empathy’, of distorting historical context¹⁶ or, alternatively, of overly dramatising and theatricalising historical scenes where the emphasis is more on emotional impact than on adhering to historical facts, resulting in a ‘dramatic condensation of the historical narrative’, which, consequently, becomes less acceptably informative.¹⁷

Jennifer Bonnell and Roger I. Simon, in their 2007 text on so-called difficult exhibitions, note, that over the past thirty years, many museums have attempted to move away from singular emphasis on ‘affirmative presentations of patriotism, triumph, and great deeds,’ and to increasingly incline towards greater acknowledgment of the complexity of heritage.¹⁸ In the aforementioned text, Bonnell and Simon aim to stimulate discussion about presenting ‘painful histories’ and ‘difficult topics’, acknowledging that these are increasingly displayed and elaborated on in museum practice, while also recognising the lack of discussion on this topic within museology. They initiate the discussion by reflecting on difficult exhibitions through two concepts – the first being that of ‘burdensome gift’, which they describe as a demanding legacy carrying with it the expectation of an empathetic response. The second is the concept of ‘intimate encounter’, which is an exhibition experience that gives visitors the potential for insight that can support new ways of connecting with, and within, the world.¹⁹ The authors also consider the kinds of exhibitions that can be considered difficult to present. In addition to the controversial ones, there are exhibitions where the concept of difficulty can be perceived through the visitor’s

food and ingredients of certain dishes, mostly desserts. There was very little paper to write on in the camp, so Andela Heder used very small letters in order to write down as much information as possible <https://www.jusp-jasenovac.hr/Uploads/61/5019/5024/5058/9174/sjecanje_na_andjelu_heder.pdf> accessed 27 November 2004.

16 Gourievidis, Laurence: *The Dynamics of Heritage. History, Memory and the Highland Clearances* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010).

17 Kelly, Niamh Ann: *Imaging the Great Irish Famine. Representing Dispossession in Visual Culture* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2018), 180.

18 Bonnell, Jennifer and Simon, Roger I.: “Difficult” Exhibitions and Intimate Encounters’, *Museum and Society* 57/2 (2007), 65–85.

19 Bonnell and Simon: “Difficult” Exhibitions and Intimate Encounters’, 66.

level of understanding which includes difficulty in respect of both cognitive and affective aspects of experiencing the exhibition. An exhibition may evoke the burden of 'negative emotions' – uncomfortable, troubling, or conflicting emotional states. Difficult exhibitions can also heighten anxiety through identification with victims of violence or disease, as well as contribute to the retraumatisation of those who were once victims of such experiences.²⁰

Eva Silvén and Andres Bjorklünd argue that one of the roles of museums is to confront controversial aspects of history, as well as to take responsibility for preserving individual experiences of broader social processes.²¹ This responsibility also involves demonstrating compassion and playing an engaged role in managing society's emotional crises, thus highlighting the museum's unique position, as a non-commercial space, for reflecting on existential issues from historical and cultural perspectives.²² An exhibition about difficult moments in history, in terms of the relationship between the visitor and presented material, should, according to Bonnell and Simon, be able to create content conveying the message that facing history can foster hope for the future.²³

Clearly, something that may be experienced as a difficult theme does not depend on specific objects or related events, but rather on the way in which an exhibition transmits its message about a particular topic. It is precisely in this transmittal process, that the acceptance of 'burdensome gift' or 'intimate encounter' with the core message, its particular element, or a complete idea, story, or central thought of the exhibition, occurs. Bonnell and Simon view the 'intimate encounter' as the visitor's individual experience of an exhibition element, that is, the impression and understanding of the exhibition through the complex lens of personal experience of what is being presented, with the possibility of a 'transformative critique of one's understanding of the world,' also occurring.²⁴

Thus, the 'intimate encounter' can be perceived as a form of sensitivity that has the capacity to unsettle one's being, while simultaneously allowing for reflective criticism and transformative insight into one's relationship with the past. A particularly

20 Bonnell and Simon: "'Difficult' Exhibitions and Intimate Encounters', 67.

21 Silvén, Eva and Bjorklünd, Andres: 'Detecting Difficulty', in Silvén, Eva – Bjorklünd, Andres eds.: *Difficult Matters. Objects and Narratives that Disturb and Affect* (Stockholm: Nordiska Museet, 2006), 248–264.

22 Silvén and Bjorklünd: 'Detecting Difficulty', 256.

23 Bonnell and Simon: "'Difficult' Exhibitions and Intimate Encounters', 65–85.

24 Bonnell and Simon: "'Difficult' Exhibitions and Intimate Encounters', 69.

important aspect is empathy, which Bonnell and Simon believe, presupposes a similarity of feelings. This reconfigured empathy shows responsibility towards the emotions of others and raises questions that change our experience of the world and our actions within it.²⁵

AFFECTIVE CURATORSHIP AND 'BURDENSOME GIFT'

Marzia Varutti explores the affective turn in museums, specifically what it means for museum theory and practice, while developing the concept of 'affective curatorship'.²⁶ This term refers to curatorial approaches that focus particularly on emotional impact on museum visitors. Varutti observes that affective curatorship subtly transforms curatorial practice and the way we think and feel about museums, as she believes that the affect, as a curatorial, theoretical, and analytical perspective, offers key insights into new roles for museums in times of increasingly-demanding emotional engagement.²⁷ Furthermore, Varutti argues that the affect opens new analytical perspectives on the power of objects.²⁸ She draws on Sandra Dudley's reflections, who warns of possible polarised views of museums and their activities, where museums are seen as being either solely dedicated to the preservation of objects (in an essentialist sense) or entirely focused on serving society.²⁹ Dudley emphasises the need for a middle-ground approach in this regard, one that explores objects as having an impact on visitors, thus treating objects as potential bridges between the museum and its visitors, as well as between the visitors themselves.³⁰ Varutti also observes how the affective power of each museum element is further enhanced by multimedia and multisensory museum environments that combine visual, textual, material, and digital elements. These museum components interact to create a mixture of emotions, physical sensations, memories, moods, and imaginative moments, collectively forming what we call 'affect'. The experiencing of a strong emotion in a museum can, according to Varutti, be conceptualised as the result of encountering something that deeply touches us, and she refers to these encounters as 'affective encounters'. The terms, 'affective encounter', intimate encounter, and 'burdensome gift', are categories through which the *Faces of Hunger* exhibition can

25 Bonnell and Simon: "'Difficult' Exhibitions and Intimate Encounters', 70.

26 Varutti, Marzia: 'The Affective Turn in Museums and the Rise of Affective Curatorship', *Museum Management and Curatorship* 38/1 (2023), 68–75.

27 Varutti: 'The Affective Turn in Museums and the Rise of Affective Curatorship', 61.

28 Varutti: 'The Affective Turn in Museums and the Rise of Affective Curatorship', 63.

29 Dudley, Sandra H.: *Museum Materialities. Objects, Sense and Feeling* (London: Routledge, 2010), 4.

30 Dudley: *Museum Materialities. Objects, Sense and Feeling*, 4.

be observed. Particularly important is the experience of guided tours by the curators through the exhibition, which can be viewed from the perspective of affective curatorship, where the exceptional experience by the curators, as I have noticed is a recognition and perception of emotions shared through the exhibition, captured in the immediate impression felt by the visitor or a group of visitors. For the authors of the exhibition, this was a particularly enriching and transformative experience, though at times also very challenging. Questions arise regarding whether the exhibition successfully conveyed emotion; whether the manner in which communication and interaction with the audience, was conducted – either directly or indirectly – created a ‘burdensome gift’; and whether the ‘intimate encounter’ adequately reflected the individual experience, not only of the person ‘reading’ the exhibition, but also of those whose experiences were being conveyed through it.

The two sections of the *Faces of Hunger* exhibition were quite challenging to present as they addressed difficult themes or dark subjects – ‘Hunger as a Political Tool’ and ‘Hunger and the Body’ – the latter exploring eating disorders. The subthemes of these two sections were also challenging – since in both, particularly regarding some topics, death was clearly discernible. In the section, ‘Hunger as a Political Tool’, major famines in different parts of the world – in Ireland and Ukraine, for example – were depicted, as were world wars, the latter by means of objects from concentration and refugee camps, and also with reference to the Homeland War in Croatia (1990–1995),³¹ the sieges of Dubrovnik (1991–1992)³² and Sarajevo (1992–1996),³³ and hunger strikes. Dealing with the visual representations of, and the guided tours through the exhibition involving items from Jasenovac concentration camp – which, after reviewing the rich associated materials, we concluded had essentially been a camp of hunger – were particularly challenging and intriguing. A few items from the Jasenovac camp were exhibited as part of the exhibition: a postcard, the cookbook of Anđela Heder, and the spoon of prisoner Berger. During one of the guided tours led by a museum colleague, when the spoon of prisoner Berger was mentioned, a visitor, having separated from her own tour group, stated that this was her father’s spoon. At that moment, my colleague, along with the rest of the visitors, was taken aback. The visitor in question later told me that my colleague was literally left speechless

31 The Homeland War was a defensive war for the independence and territorial integrity of the Croatian state 1990–1995). <<https://enciklopedija.hr/clanak/domovinski-rat>> accessed 20 November 2024.

32 The siege of Dubrovnik during the Homeland War started on the 1st of October 1991 and lasted until 30th of May 1992. <<https://enciklopedija.hr/clanak/dubrovnik>> accessed 20 November 2024.

33 During the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1991–1995) Sarajevo was under the siege from 1992 until 1995. <<https://enciklopedija.hr/clanak/sarajevo>> accessed 20 November 2024.

– that she was not only without words, but literally without voice, unable to say anything or to continue the tour of the exhibition. The silence was broken by the visitor. She said almost comfortingly and soothingly that it was okay, that it was a good thing that it was her father's spoon, because it was proof that her father was all right. He survived the camp and returned home, and the family decided to donate the spoon to the Jasenovac Memorial Site. Later on, in subsequent tours of the exhibition, my colleague and I referred to this piece of information – the fact, the testimony of the visitor – which, along with the object already burdened with history, became part of its new history, a new narrative of the difficult theme of the years of hunger, the period of history, and the site of the camp where people were starved to death. Along with the spoon as an important object, the fate of which was not fully known until that moment in one of the guided tours, we also drew the visitors' attention to the cookbook of Andela Heder where the recipes from happier times were recorded, as a testament of hope and comfort, and serving as a pledge for the future that those kinds of times would return again some day.

The second dark section of the exhibition dealt with eating disorders. This part of the exhibition also involved collaboration between the museum and the Day Care Centre for Eating Disorders at the Sveti Ivan Psychiatry Clinic. Working together, they designed the 'Remek Tijelo' (wordplay: the 'Masterpiece Body') campaign and held an online competition in this context, for students in upper grades of elementary schools and the first and second grades of high schools. As part of the competition, students had an opportunity to apply to participate in the competition, using all the tools available, to express what 'Remek Tijelo' meant to them. The authors of the best submissions in this regard were rewarded by participating in the 'Course for Prevention of Eating Disorders'. This course consisted of eight workshops, held every other Saturday, and led by trained therapists from the Day Care Centre for Eating Disorders. About twenty girls, some of whom came from as far away as Osijek in eastern Croatia, became ambassadors for the prevention of eating disorders. They were expected to pass on the knowledge they had gained while on the course to the students in their schools and to anyone else interested in the matter. One of the exhibits in this section of the exhibition itself was a poster composed of the drawings created by the patients of the Day Care Centre for Eating Disorders at the Sveti Ivan Psychiatry. The drawings on the poster reveal the fragile and uncertain worlds of the patients, and it is this raw vulnerability that profoundly resonates with visitors. It creates an intimate space for emotional connection between the visitors, the exhibition's creators, and those whose message the exhibition – or certain parts of it – aims to convey.

CONCLUSION

The *Faces of Hunger* exhibition examined core aspects of its creation, from research to installation, resulting in a carefully-balanced, non-intrusive environment for audiences. Marzia Varutti outlines three analytical approaches for the evoking of emotion in exhibitions – directly engaging with emotions, using design and architecture to subtly elicit emotional responses, and incorporating activities that foster emotional engagement. In *Faces of Hunger*, these perspectives are interwoven with each other, encouraging a compassionate response to the complex subject of hunger. Audience feedback and engagement, from both the professional community and the public, demonstrated the exhibition's success in fostering responsible communication and interaction, preserving the individuality of those represented, and enhancing each visitor's personal experience. *Faces of Hunger* exemplified how carefully-designed elements, spatial architecture, and active visitor participation, can promote reflection, understanding, and empathy on challenging social issues.

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HIROKO NAKAZAWA

EFFECTS OF THE DESIGNATION OF YAKIMOCCHI AS AN INTANGIBLE FOLK CULTURAL PROPERTY IN JAPAN

ABSTRACT

Since 1983, Nagano Prefecture has designated five local dishes as intangible folk cultural properties. This study examines the effects of designating *yakimochi* ('stuffed dumplings') as cultural heritage. The results indicate that this designation has contributed to the preservation and dissemination of *yakimochi* culture for future generations.

INTRODUCTION

Nagano Prefecture, located in the centre of Honshu, the main island of Japan, is the fourth largest prefecture in Japan (Fig. 1).¹ Its territory encompasses mountain ranges with elevations of approximately 3,000m (9,800ft). Mountains occupy 84% of Nagano's land, making the Prefecture landlocked. Nagano's geographic features vary. The variation in climate and terrain results in a diverse food culture across the regions. The Prefecture benefits from bounteous harvests due to its mountains and rivers, its high-altitude vegetables such as lettuce, and fruits such as apples and grapes.²

Nagano Prefecture has preserved and passed on its diverse food culture as a valuable asset. Since 1983, it has designated five local dishes as Nagano's selected intangible

1 Reference to this study: Hiroko Nakazawa: Effects of the Designation of Yakimochi as an Intangible Folk Cultural Property in Japan. In Anikó Bádi and Patricia Lysaght (eds.): *Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage*. Budapest: ELTE RCH Institute of Ethnology – Museum of Ethnography, 2025. pp. 147–159.
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2 Naganoken no Nogyo ('Agriculture of Nagano Prefecture') (Nagano Prefecture) <<https://www.pref.nagano.lg.jp/koho/kids/menu02/nougyo.html>> accessed 22 August 2024.

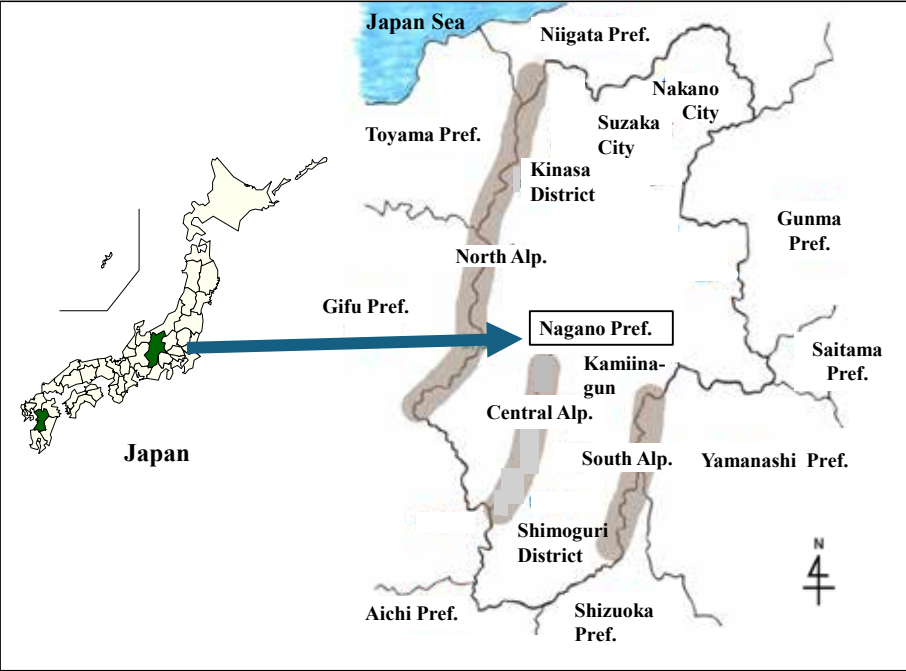


Fig. 1. Map of Japan and Nagano Prefecture

folk cultural properties ('cultural assets of taste').³ These dishes are: *Yakimochi* ('stuffed dumplings'), *Teuchi soba* ('handmade soba noodles'), *Gohei-mochi* ('skewered rice cake, coated with sauce, and grilled'), *Nozawana-zuke* ('quintessential pickled green, *Nozawana* pickles'), and *Sunki-zuke* ('stems of the red turnips fermented without salt using natural lactic acid bacilli'). The designation of these cultural assets of taste has been widely covered in the media and communicated to the people of Nagano Prefecture. These dishes, as cultural assets, were selected before any other prefecture in the country had designated food as cultural property. In 2013, the Japanese government designated 'food-related customs' (*WASHOKU*; Traditional Dietary Cultures of the Japanese) – based on the Japanese ethos of 'respecting nature' – as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage. Nagano Prefecture has been concerned with the decline in traditional food culture for 30 years – actually longer than the Japanese government itself. To date, the Prefecture has designated 13 local dishes as cultural heritage.

This study clarifies the effects of designating *yakimochi* as a cultural taste asset and assesses the current status and results of efforts to protect and transmit *yakimochi* food culture more widely in Nagano Prefecture.

Materials and Methods

The literature survey was based on a survey report designating 'cultural assets of taste',⁴ and literature specific to *yakimochi*. Between 2021 and 2024, interviews were conducted with six *yakimochi* specialty shops in Nagano City in order to gather information on the history and current status of *yakimochi* sales. To promote *yakimochi* food culture, interviews were also conducted with food education volunteers and participants involved in food-culture activities across Suzaka, Nakano, the Shimoguri District of Iida City, and Kinasa District of Nagano City, for the period 2018–2024. Additionally, questionnaire surveys were administered to students from the University of Nagano who participated in *yakimochi*-making activities in Suzaka City and Kinasa District of Nagano City from 2018 to 2023. *Verbal informed consent was obtained from all of the participants at the start of the survey.*

3 Nagano Prefectural Education Committee, eds., *Naganoken Sentakumukei Minzoku Bunkazai Cyosa Houkoku* ('An Investigation and Report on the Nagano Prefecture Selected Intangible Folk Cultural Properties') (Nagano: Nagano Prefecture, 1984), 1.

4 Nagano Prefectural Education Committee, eds., *Naganoken Sentakumukei Minzoku Bunkazai Cyosa Houkoku*, 21–35.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Literature survey

According to the report⁵ on 'cultural assets of taste', there were many mountain villages with steeply-sloping fields and a few rice paddies, in Nagano Prefecture. In these areas, the preparation of *yakimochi*, which was traditionally heated in the ashes of a hearth, was widely distributed. *Yakimochi* is primarily prepared from wheat or buckwheat flour. The term *oyaki* (instead of *yakimochi*) has been used for 20 years in Nagano Prefecture, having become common there around 1963. In parts of Kamiina-gun, *yakimochi* prepared from rice-flour is referred to as *yakimochi* in the *Ebisu Kou* ('Ebisu Festival'). Ebisu is a member of the Seven Gods of Good Fortune, and is a deity of good fortune who offers blessings for good harvests, prosperous business, and family safety. As *irori* ('hearths') and, therefore, heating ashes, have almost completely disappeared from ordinary households, *yakimochi* is now baked or steamed. *Yakimochi* food culture comprises local dishes that have been adapted to each region's environment; thus, in terms of these dishes, there are no restrictions on the kinds of dough, ingredients, seasoning, or heating methods used.

Cookbooks related to local home cooking have been published in Nagano Prefecture, many of which mention *yakimochi* and *oyaki*. Several specialised books on *yakimochi* have appeared since 1984. Books specialising in *yakimochi* food culture describe various kinds of *yakimochi* dishes from different parts of Nagano Prefecture, mentioning also their ingredients, roots, events, *the yakimochi festival*, shops selling *yakimochi*, and *yakimochi* recipes. They also contain many memories and thoughts of the Nagano people about *yakimochi* and its appeal (Table 1).

5 Nagano Prefectural Education Committee, eds., *Naganoken Sentakumukei Minzoku Bunkazai Cyosa Houkoku*, 21–35.

Title: English translation	Author(s)/ editor(s)	Year	Publisher	Brief overview of the book
The Story of <i>Oyaki</i> and <i>Yakimochi</i>	Ura, Masashi	1984	Ginga Shobo	The designation as a cultural asset of taste by the Prefecture has started to attract interest from this perspective
Talking Oyaki and Living <i>Oyaki</i>	Kashiwa Planning eds.	2000	Kashiwa Planning	Twenty five people share their memories and experiences of <i>Yakimochi</i> . Three shops started selling them in the 1960s
Masters of Making <i>Oyaki</i>	Ishizaka, Satoko eds.	2001	Kashiwa Planning	Eleven <i>yakimochi</i> masters shared their tips on cooking <i>yakimochi</i> , including the dough, ingredients and heating methods
Fifty-six Questions about <i>Oyaki</i>	Kashiwa Planning eds.	2006	Kashiwa Planning	To summarise Nagano's speciality <i>yakimochi</i> in the form of questions and answers
Shinshu <i>Oyaki Tours</i>	Koide, Yoko	2013	Kawabeshorin	The stories of 12 places with <i>yakimochi</i> masters. Information on 125 Hokushin, 26 Toshin, 48 Chushin and 21 Nanshin shops of <i>yakimochi</i>
The Textbook of <i>Oyaki</i>	Koide, Yoko	2019	Shinano Mainichi Newspaper Co.	Instructions for more than 20 different types of dough and 80 different filling recipes using seasonal vegetables

Table 1. *Titles, authors or editors, years of publication, publishers, and a brief overview of the yakimochi speciality book*

In Japan, rice was a symbol of affluence until around 1950. Rice was used as a substitute for wages, especially in the Edo period (1603–1868). On the other hand, *yakimochi*, mostly made from ingredients other than rice, was a symbol of poverty, as people who prepared *yakimochi* were unable to have enough rice to eat. However, the literature also described a change in the way the people of Nagano Prefecture now think of *yakimochi* because of its designation as a cultural asset.⁶

Flour millers in the Prefecture sell local and special flour-mixes for the production of *yakimochi*. According to statistics comparing prefectural capitals, Nagano City, among other prefectures, purchases the largest amount of flour in Japan (3,774 grams per year in Nagano City, while the national average is 2,256 grams per year).⁷

⁶ Ura, Masashi, *Oyaki Yakimochi no Hanashi* ("The story of *Oyaki* and *Yakimochi*") (Nagano: Ginga Shobo, 1984), 146–151.

⁷ Futari Ijyo no Setai: 2021–2023 Nen Heikin 1 Setai Atari Nenkan no Sisuyutu Kingaku Oyobi Kounyū Suryo ('Households of two or more persons: Average annual expenditure and quantity purchased per household in 2021–2023'), *Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications*, <<https://www.stat.go.jp/data/keiei/5.html>> accessed 22 August 2024.

It can be inferred from this data, that the making of *yakimochi* by households is the reason for the high consumption of flour in Nagano Prefecture. However, the literature and statistics also indicate that households, in general, no longer consume *yakimochi* as a daily meal, and that some households continue to make *yakimochi* only for special events and for pleasure,

Interviews with *yakimochi* stores and manufacturers

We were told that a long-established shop in Nagano Prefecture had been selling *yakimochi* since 1973. A specialised book on *yakimochi* mentioned several specialty shops that had started to sell *yakimochi* around the 1960s (Table 1).⁸ It was inferred from interviews and literature that the sale of *yakimochi* actually started in the 1960s. As home preparation decreased, the *yakimochi* designation led to many confectionery shops selling it. Designation as an intangible folk cultural property in Nagano Prefecture ranked lowest in terms of cultural property protection administration. However, the people in Nagano are more familiar with *yakimochi* than other cultural properties. Some *yakimochi* shops advertised it as an important cultural property of the Prefecture owing to its high advertising value.

Currently, *yakimochi* is sold in supermarkets and convenience stores in Nagano Prefecture, and there has been a shift towards its sale throughout the Prefecture for tourists to eat and to buy as a souvenir. The interviews revealed that commercially-available *yakimochi* uses different individual heating methods, as well as a combination of them, such as frying, steaming, and baking, to produce *yakimochi* with a characteristic texture. Photographs of *yakimochi* from six specialty shops are shown in Fig. 2. They differ in appearance and taste because of the different cooking methods and ingredients used. Multiple innovations have been made in the fillings of commercial *yakimochi*, with new products being developed to suit seasonal and consumer preferences.

A long-established *yakimochi* shop, with six outlets across the Prefecture, opened a factory in July 2022. The factory, capable of producing 10,000 units of *yakimochi* per day, featured a café, sales shop, factory tour, and a *yakimochi*-making experience corner. Approximately 1,700 people experienced the *yakimochi*-making process in just over one year. Due to the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, mail-order sales have more than doubled over the last three years. Media coverage also led to more young customers being attracted to this particular shop compared to others.

8 Kashiwa Planning, eds., *Kataru Oyaki, Ikiru Oyaki* ('Talking Oyaki and Living Oyaki') (Nagano: Kashiwa Planning, 2000), 97–122.



Fig. 2. Commercially available yakimochi from six shops using different heating methods.
(Photo by Hiroko Nakazawa)

Additionally, a frozen *yakimochi* vending machine on the shop premises provided a 24-hour opportunity for customers to enjoy *yakimochi*.

The increase in *yakimochi* sales for *yakimochi* shops and manufacturers clearly demonstrates that the designation of *yakimochi* as a culinary cultural asset has significantly contributed to the promotion of the industry.

Interviews and questionnaires on activities to pass on *yakimochi* food culture

Efforts to transmit *yakimochi* culture to food education volunteers in Nagano Prefecture have been undertaken since 1983. Furthermore, food education volunteers in Suzaka City have been teaching local students how to make steamed *yakimochi* since 2018. A total of 111 students participated in the project during the 4 years of its operation, excluding 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The results of the questionnaire survey showed a valid response-rate of 88%: 76 students (72%) answered that the experience was 'very good', and 22 students (28%) responded that it was 'good'. In the free-text sections of the questionnaires, comments included: 'It was really fun, and the handmade *yakimochi* was very tasty'; 'It was difficult to do, but it was fun to do it together'; and, 'It was good to learn how to make *yakimochi* from local people who have been making it for a long time, and to learn about tips and local food culture.'

The results of the survey showed that the cooking experience led to increased interest in *yakimochi* among the participants, as they experienced both fun and delicious food while making local dishes.

Next, we report on activities in Nakano City about the making of *yakimochi*, highlighting that the Nakano City Dietary Improvement Promotion Council held a training session on the steaming of *yakimochi* at the Nakano City Health Centre, on 19 July 2024. Participants enjoyed making the dough, preparing and wrapping the ingredients, and steaming them. Clear instructions on ingredient care ensured that the participants could make delicious *yakimochi* correctly, thereby gaining valuable wisdom and skills from the experts during the training session.

Since 1983, the Nakano Council members have conducted '*yakimochi*-making classes' for primary-school children in order to pass on the local food cultures. *Yakimochi* is considered a dish that embraces the seasons, as its ingredients are

seasonal, thus, conveying seasonal change and nostalgia. Although these activities were temporarily suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic, they have now resumed, with practical sessions being conducted at primary schools upon request.

By making *yakimochi*, the children were taught wisdom and skills based on local food production – for consumption, the transmission of local dishes and food culture, the ability to choose, taste, and cook food, to have a healthy body, and to feel the life of food.

The survey revealed that by making *yakimochi*, the children developed an increased interest in local food and health. They said that they would think of their hometowns and become confident and proud of them.

Next, we report on our activities in the Shimoguri District of Iida City, which we visited on 8 May 2022. At a guest house with a sunken hearth, we asked a farmer's wife, who was familiar with the local cuisine, to teach us how to make *yakimochi* using buckwheat dough with salted *sanma* ('Pacific saury') as the filling. The Shimoguri District is a highland settlement at an altitude between 800 and 1100m. As it was difficult to harvest wheat, dough was made from buckwheat flour. In this area, *yakimochi* are called *soba-dango* ('buckwheat dumplings'). *Soba-dango* was made using salted saury cut into 2–3cm pieces as the filling.

The students' comments included:

I had no idea what *Soba-dango* with salted saury would look or taste like. However, it was the first time I had ever used this combination, and I found it to be delicious. I was also surprised that the ingredients were simpler and easier to use than expected. However, because it was simple, I felt that many years of experience were required in terms of getting to understand the amount of water and cooking-time involved.

The buckwheat dough with *shio-sanma* ('salted Pacific saury') filling was a rare combination of *yakimochi*. The practical activity associated with making this version of *yakimochi* enabled the students to recognise the wisdom and skills of their ancestors, to taste simple deliciousness, and to think about the local food culture and lifestyle. Salted *sanma* buckwheat dumplings are seldom produced today because houses with sunken hearths are rare. However, owing to *yakimochi*'s designation as a cultural asset, the citizens of Iida and Nagano Prefectures became aware that it was a local food source in the Shimoguri District.

Finally, we report on our activities in the Kinasa District of Nagano City. The Kinasa District is representative of an area where *yakimochi* is frequently consumed as an everyday food. Since 2019, we have been working to transmit the traditional way of making *yakimochi* – traditionally cooked with the heat of ashes – at a house where the sunken hearth remained, by asking local agricultural wives who were familiar with the conventional *yakimochi*-making process, for advice (Fig. 3). Traditional *yakimochi* was baked on a *hōroku* ('flat iron pan'), dried, and then placed in ashes in the hearth to cook.⁹

Although this was not possible in 2022 due to Covid-19, three *yakimochi*-making sessions were held in 2019, three in 2020, three in 2021, six in 2023, and five in August 2024. Participants in the 2023 sessions were surveyed, and 30 student responses (91% valid response rate) were received. All students (100%) answered that their experiences were 'very good'.

Student feedback included:

I realised that although the ingredients and seasoning of ash-baked *yakimochi* were very simple, cooking them in ashes brought out the natural flavour and made them very tasty. Also, the detailed instructions on how to make the ingredients, and how to wrap the *yakimochi*, helped me to get the hang of it, which was a very good experience...

The outside was crispy and the best way to enjoy it was to eat it while it was warm. The burnt bits were delicious.

The survey results revealed that designation as a culinary asset was useful for *yakimochi* propagation. As a part of transmission activities, local people shared stories about old life in the region, the joy of growing local crops, cooking local dishes, food processing and preservation techniques, the role of agriculture in nurturing life, and their gratitude to nature and people. The appeal of *yakimochi* lies in its flexible ingredients, seasonings, and heating methods, which allows for various flavours, appearances, and textures. Future problems likely to arise regarding *yakimochi* transmission activities were associated with the age of the inheritors, the need to secure ingredients, and the maintenance of cooking facilities such as hearths, and utensils such as *hōroku*, and the difficulties in obtaining hygienic authorisation from the Health Authorities to sell *yakimochi* baked in ashes. In the future, the *yakimochi* designation should be utilised to ensure that the *yakimochi* culture is

⁹ Nagano Prefectural Education Committee, eds., *Naganoken Sentakumukei Minzoku Bunkazai Cyosa Houkoku*, 21–35.



Fig. 3. The ash-baked Yakimochi-making activity in the Kinasa district on 8 July 2023.
(Photo by Hiroko Nakazawa)

transferred to the younger generation, and to strive to practice sustainable activities for the transmission of tradition.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of literature, interviews, and questionnaire surveys reveals several key features resulting from the designating of *yakimochi* as a cultural heritage site: (1) the recognition of *yakimochi* as an important cultural asset has gained traction among the people of Nagano Prefecture; (2) different variants of *yakimochi* have been sold at stores throughout the Prefecture, catering to tourists and serving as souvenirs, which has contributed to the promotion of the industry; (3) the appeal of *yakimochi* is attributed to its adaptable ingredients and diverse cooking methods which vary by locality, household, and store; and (4) efforts that have been made by Nagano Prefecture, local shops, manufacturers, and food education volunteers since 1983, for the preservation and intergenerational transfer of the unique qualities and cultural significance of *yakimochi*

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PART II:

FOOD AND FOODWAYS AS HERITAGE-
MAKING: LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES
AND TOURISM



SILKE BARTSCH

REGIONAL FOOD AND ETHNIC IDENTITY

Discourse on the Potential of Regional Food Campaigns

ABSTRACT

German consumers have great confidence in regional food, fostered by marketing campaigns and also by governments. The aim of this paper is to analyse governmental regional campaigns in order to show how the term ‘cultural heritage’ is used as part of embedded food systems and that it has the potential to create ethnic identities in heterogeneous societies.

INTRODUCTION

German consumers¹ have great confidence in regional food.² This food trend – as well as (inter-)national food strategies aimed at providing an improved and a more sustainable way of eating – has been promoted by regional marketing policies for more than two decades.³ Regionality in food production also acts as a concept for

1 Reference to this study: Silke Bartsch: Regional Food and Ethnic Identity: Discourse on the Potential of Regional Food Campaigns. In Anikó Báti and Patricia Lysaght (eds.): *Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage*. Budapest: ELTE RCH Institute of Ethnology – Museum of Ethnography, 2025. pp. 163–176.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61380/978-963-567-084-0-8>

2 VZBV (Verbraucherzentrale Bundesverband), 2022 ‘*Verbrauchererwartungen bei regionalen Lebensmitteln und Herkunftsangaben*’ (‘Consumer expectations for regional foods and indications of origin’). <https://www.vzbv.de/sites/default/files/2022-03/22-03_02_Onlinebefragung_Regionale%20Lebensmittel.pdf> accessed 15 June 2024; Moller, Björn – Voglhuber-Slavinsky, Ariane – Dönitz, Ewam and Aaron, Rosa: *50 trends influencing Europe's food sector by 2035* (Karlsruhe: Institute for Systems and Innovation Research ISI, 2019).

3 Dorandt, Stephanie: *Analyse des Konsumenten- und Anbieterverhaltens am Beispiel von regionalen Lebensmitteln: Empirische Studie zur Förderung des Konsumenten-Anbieter-Dialogs* (‘Analysis of consumer and supplier behaviour using the example of regional foods: Empirical study to promote consumer-provider dialogue’) (Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovac, 2004).; Bartsch, Silke and Feigl, Eva: ‘Regional essen in Karlsruhe. Ein konstruiertes Fallbeispiel’ (‘Eating regionally in Karlsruhe. A constructed case study’), *Ernährung im Fokus* 17/5–6 (2017), 172–176.; BMEL (Bundesministerium

food security at a time of increasing international crises of various kinds and degrees of severity.

In Germany, there is a large number of regional campaigns being carried out by the ministries in the different federal states that also aim to encourage the purchase of regional food. 'Region', in this context, is not clearly defined and while the borders of the federal states are often not the same as the borders of the regions, nevertheless, these strategies (re-)create a feeling of ethnic group identity.⁴

Therefore, the aim of this study is to analyse governmental regional campaigns having regard to the following research questions: (1) 'Is food to be understood as "cultural heritage" in terms of Di Giovine and Brulotte's definition?'⁵ and (2) 'How is a common identity to be (re-)created with (increasingly) heterogeneous social structures?

The paper is structured as follows. Initially, the terms and concepts used in the discussion are introduced. Then, the methodological approach, including the samples featured in the study, is described. The results and interpretation are structured according to the research questions in order to conclude by discussing the potential of the campaigns for the re-interpretation of regional identity for heterogeneous societies.

REGIONAL FOOD

In Germany, regional food has been very popular for more than two decades, even more so than organic food, although there is no definition of 'regional food' to be found in the country's consumer law.⁶ Therefore, the expectations that people, especially household consumers, have about regional food are interesting. These

für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft), *Gutes Essen für Deutschland. Ernährungsstrategie der Bundesregierung* ('Good food for Germany. Food strategy of the Federal Government') (Berlin: BMEL, 2024).

4 Di Giovine, Michael. A. and Brulotte, Ronda L.: 'Introduction: Food and Foodways as Cultural Heritage', in Brulotte, Ronda L. and Di Giovine, Michael A. eds.: *Edible Identities: Food as Cultural Heritage* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2016), 1–27.

5 Di Giovine and Brulotte: 'Introduction: Food and Foodways as Cultural Heritage', 1–27.

6 Dorandt, Stephanie: 'Shopping behaviour of private households towards regional food', in Butijn, C.A.A. – Groot-Marcus, J.P. – van der Linden, M. – Steenbekkers, L.P.A. and Terpstra, P.M.J. eds.: *Changes at the other end of the chain. Everyday consumption in a multidisciplinary perspective* (Maastricht: Shaker Publishing, 2002), 327–338; BMEL 'Regionale Lebensmittel - transparent gekennzeichnet eine gute Wahl' ('Regional food - a good choice when labelled transparently'). <<https://www.bmel.de/DE/themen/ernaehrung/lebensmittel-kennzeichnung/freiwillige-angaben-und-label/kennzeichnung-regionale-lebensmittel.html>> accessed 28 August 2024; EU-Verordnung Nr. 1169/2011.

include ideas about the quality of the food – that it is fresher and healthier than food produced elsewhere or by other means – and that it involves providing support for local farm producers.⁷ In general, regions are characterised by their inhabitants, who maintain close cultural, linguistic or economic ties to each other. Examples of such regions are: Rhine-Main area, Allgaeu, and the Black Forest.

ALTERNATIVE FOOD SYSTEMS AND THE CONCEPT OF EMBEDDED ECONOMY

Since the Second World War, the ‘industrial food system’ has been increasingly based on the ‘green revolution’ and is part of the global market. This system optimises earnings and separates people from the origin of their food. This alienation has led to the devaluation of, and less trust in food, as well as to global health problems, especially with regard to overeating and malnutrition. This system is termed the ‘dis-embedded economy’, because cultural, social, regional, and ecological bonding and contexts are no longer connected and co-operating in the territories.⁸ This led in the 1990s to the so-called Alternative Food Systems as counter models – one of the best known of these is ‘Slow Food’ founded in Italy in 1986. For the consumer, this movement, in stressing appreciation of ‘good food’ and trust in the quality of food as part of a ‘healthy’ diet, emphasised that the food in question was that produced via short value chains and local craftsmanship.⁹

‘Alternative Food System’ is a theoretical framework for scientific, practical and political purposes. It uses the ‘concept of embeddedness’,¹⁰ since this ‘Alternative Food System’ is considered an ‘embedded economy’ if it relies on locally-operating agricultural producers and processing companies that are oriented towards cultural traditions and which operate according to ecological standards and recognise regional borders.¹¹

7 Herfurth, Paul – Boduch, Andrina and Bartsch, Silke: ‘Regional ist besser? Komplexität der Ernährungssysteme und Grenzen der Komplexitätsreduktion’ (‘Regional is better? Complexity of food systems and the limits of complexity reduction’), *Haushalt in Bildung & Forschung* 2 (2024), 99–116.

8 Barlösius, Eva: *Soziologie des Essens* (‘Sociology of eating’) (Weinheim, Basel: Beltz Juventa, 2016, 3rd edn.), 303ff.

9 Barlösius: *Soziologie des Essens*, 306; Herfurth, Boduch and Bartsch, ‘Regional ist besser?’, 99–116.

10 Barlösius: *Soziologie des Essens*, 305; Polanyi, Karl: *The Great Transformation* (New York: Rinehart, 1944).

11 Barlösius: *Soziologie des Essens*, 306.

CULTURAL HERITAGE

The term *heritage* was created in France and Britain in former times with the idea of paying more attention to the idea of culture and to alert people to beware of just material goods in looking to the future. It was thus not limited to food.¹² The focus, in the context of this contribution, however, is 'the ways in which the cultivation, preparation, and consumption of food is used to create identity claims of "cultural heritage" on local, regional, national and international scales.'¹³ It deals especially with 'how food is used to mark insiders and outsiders' and, 'how traditions are "invented" for the economic and social revitalization of communities.'¹⁴ In this way, the constructed discourse on *cultural heritage* is more interesting than the limited view just focusing on goods and practices in order to discuss 'regional identity' in heterogeneous societies. In the context of food and ethnic identity, the point of interest is, 'how food, conceptualized as marker of heritage, creates and reinforces ethnic group identity in increasingly multicultural milieux.'¹⁵ Therefore, the information texts of the regional campaigns discussed in this paper, are used 'to see how food is used to represent and distinguish a particular outsider group or people, often through discourses of heritage and tradition.'¹⁶

METHODS, SAMPLE OF REGIONAL CAMPAIGNS AND LIMITATION

With the use of systematic internet research and selective enquiries to the ministries of the various federal states, the question of which campaign(s) existed in which federal state, and which could be used for analysis in this study, was investigated.

In Germany there are 16 federal states in total. Nine of these have regional campaigns or strategies, while six are involved with regional labelling (Fig. 1.). Some of them, like Baden-Wuerttemberg (BW), North Rhine-Westphalia (NW) and Saxony (SN), have both. For the purposes of this study, the objectives, concepts, and food selection, and the campaigns or strategies of the above-mentioned nine federal states, were selected (Table 1.). The information on the opening homepage of each ministry was chosen for this purpose.

12 Di Giovine and Brulotte: 'Introduction. Food and Foodways as Cultural Heritage'; 1.

13 Di Giovine and Brulotte: 'Introduction. Food and Foodways as Cultural Heritage'; 2.

14 Di Giovine and Brulotte: 'Introduction. Food and Foodways as Cultural Heritage'; 2.

15 Di Giovine and Brulotte: 'Introduction. Food and Foodways as Cultural Heritage'; 3.

16 Di Giovine and Brulotte: 'Introduction. Food and Foodways as Cultural Heritage'; 4.

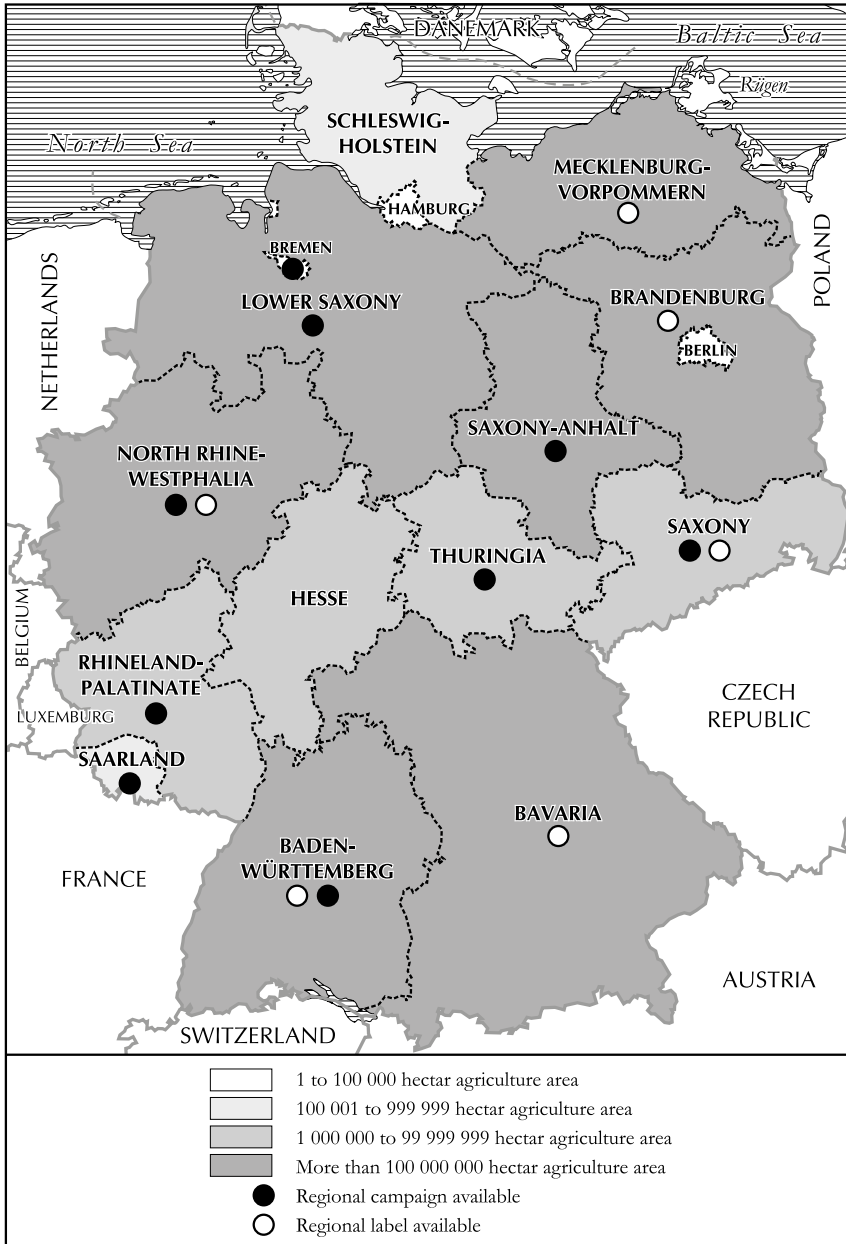


Fig. 1. Regional campaigns in the federal states (Germany)¹⁷. Map by Béla Nagy

17 Source of the size of the agriculture area: Statistisches Bundesamt. <<https://regionalatlas.statistikportal.de>> accessed 8 July 2024.

Federal State with Regional Campaigns	Abbrev.	Original Name or slogan of the regional campaigns in the Federal States of Germany <i>Translation by the author</i>
Baden-Württemberg <i>Baden-Wuerttemberg</i>	BW	Regionalkampagne: 'Natürlich. VON DAHEIM' ¹⁸ <i>Regional Campaign: 'Naturally. From Home'</i>
Bremen <i>Bremen</i>	HB	Kampagne: 'Kauf da ein wo's herkommt' ¹⁹ <i>Campaign: 'Buy there, where it comes from'</i>
Niedersachsen <i>Lower Saxony</i>	NI	Regionalitätsstrategie für Lebensmittel aus Niedersachsen ²⁰ <i>Regional strategy for food from Lower Saxony</i>
Nordrhein-Westfalen [NRW] <i>North Rhine-Westphalia</i>	NW	Kampagne: 'Total lokal – die 100% NRW-Ernährung' ²¹ <i>Campaign: 'Totally local – the 100% NRW diet'</i> [North Rhine-Westphalia diet]
Rheinland-Pfalz <i>Rhineland-Palatinate</i>	RP	Kampagne: 'Rheinland-Pfalz Gold' ²² <i>Campaign: 'Golden Rhineland-Palatinate'</i>
Saarland <i>Saarland</i>	SL	Genuss Region Saarland: 'Heimat auf dem Teller' ²³ <i>Eating pleasure in the region of Saarland: 'Home country of on the plate'</i>
Sachsen <i>Saxony</i>	SN	Strategie: Regionale Wertschöpfung Freistaat Sachsen 2023 ²⁴ <i>Strategy: Regional food value chain of the Free State of Saxony 2023</i>
Sachsen-Anhalt <i>Saxony-Anhalt</i> ²⁵	ST	Beispiel: Regionalkiste Genussvielfalt Anhalt-Bitterfeld ²⁶ <i>Example: Regional box of Anhalt-Bitterfeld's variety of delights</i>
Thüringen <i>Thüringen</i>	TH	'Meine Region – Regional kann mehr' ²⁷ <i>'My region – regional can do more'</i>

Table 1. Names or slogans of the regional campaigns (Germany)

18 <<https://vondaheim.de/Lde/Startseite>> accessed 12 September 2024.

19 <<https://regional-leben.de/kauf-da-ein-wo-es-herkommt/>> accessed 12 September 2024.

20 <https://www.ernaehrungsstrategie-niedersachsen.de/datenbank/51_Landesdialog_Regionalitaetsstrategie_fuer_Lebensmittel_aus_Niedersachsen> accessed 12 September 2024.

21 <<https://www.landservice.de/magazin/kampagne-total-lokal>> accessed 12 September 2024.

22 <<https://gold.rlp.de/kampagne>> accessed 12 September 2024.

23 <<https://www.urlaub.saarland/Reisethemen/Genussder-in-Erinnerung-bleibt>> accessed 12 September 2024.

24 <<https://publikationen.sachsen.de/bdb/artikel/41494/lesen>> accessed 12 September 2024.

25 This organisation differs from the others as it is organised on a decentralised basis.

26 <<https://amg.sachsen-anhalt.de/landwirtschaft/regionalkisten-und-siegel/regionalkisten/genussvielfalt-anhalt-bitterfeld>> accessed 12 September 2024.

27 <<https://regionalschmecken.de/>> accessed 12 September 2024.

The texts of the nine selected campaigns (Table 1.) on the ministries' homepages are analysed in terms of content.²⁸ Therefore, two independent research persons examined, among other things, the objectives of the campaigns and the benefits of, and the reasons for, the campaigns in question, as cited and emphasised in the homepages reviewed. The results were discussed by the author and the two student assistants, and finally evaluated by the author on this basis. The pictures on the homepages were not analysed because not all of them are authentic, e.g. the source was a commercial database of pictures. This explorative study describes the text on the starting/opening homepage of the chosen campaigns, without analysing all the materials, actions, and so on, of the whole campaigns in question. For the first research question raised, this exploration is sufficient to obtain initial results and to provide indications for further studies. For the second research question, online-materials of the campaign of Baden-Wuerttemberg (BW) were additionally analysed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Regional campaigns as part of embedded economic systems

All the homepages of the nine federal states that were examined set out the aims of the campaigns – to promote the regional marketing of food in general. The texts of these homepages mention certain foods such as vegetables, meat or wine, or show examples of these in pictures, while some states actually name dishes – such as *Schwäbische Maultaschen*²⁹ – or share recipes. Apart from Rhineland-Palatinate (where wine is highlighted), no food is particularly emphasised, although the messages are very clear:

‘Wir wollen diese Entwicklung [zu mehr qualitativ hochwertigen regionalen Produkten], und damit den Trend hin zu regionalen Absatzmärkten, mit unserer Kampagne unterstützen.’³⁰

28 Baur, Nina, and Jörg Blasius, eds., *Handbuch Methoden der empirischen Sozialforschung* ('Handbook of empirical social research methods') (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2022, 3rd ed.).

29 It is a kind of Swabian dumpling which is well-known in the region.

30 'We want to support this development [towards more high-quality regional products], and thus the trend towards regional sales markets, with our campaign'; translated by the author. <<https://vondaheim.de/Lde/Startseite/Kampagne>> accessed 25 August 2024.

‘Wer regional kauft, der hilft mit, unsere Heimat zu erhalten und unterstützt aktiv Landwirte aus der Region.’³¹

‘...sondern leisten auch einen wertvollen Beitrag für die regionale Wirtschaft und die Umwelt.’³²

All the campaigns are marketing campaigns and embedded in (regional) economic systems.³³ A first screening of campaign names or slogans (Table 1.) indicated the kind of added-value that was used for marketing purposes: *natural* (BW), *country of home / homeland* (BW, SL), and the *concept of local* (HB, NI, NW, RP). This latter concept is linked to the idea that each campaign that is ‘local’ is, or can be, better than the others. For example, the Rhineland-Palatinate campaign states that the region of that federal state is ‘golden’, and the meaning of the slogan in Thüringen is: ‘My region can do better’ (cf. Table 1.).

Regional campaigns and the concept of terroir

The campaigns focus on food production. Therefore, authenticity and foodstuff are associated with terrain – the place of production, cultivation and consumption.³⁴

One of Di Giovine’s informants, quoted in his chapter in this volume, explains that while Italy faces real competition by China in replicating its leatherwear and other goods at lower costs, Italy’s alimentary products – wine, cheese, meats and vegetables – cannot be reproduced because they are cultivated in the unique terrain and climate that simply cannot simply be replicated elsewhere.³⁵

The slogan ‘*Totally local – 100% NRW nutrition*’ is related to the identity concept via nutrition (‘You are, what you eat’ [Ludwig A. Feuerbach]³⁶). This is similar to the

31 ‘Buying local supports the preservation of our home country/homeland and actively supports farmers in the region’; translated by the author. <<https://mlr.baden-wuerttemberg.de/de/unsere-themen/landwirtschaft/regionale-landwirtschaft/kampagne-natuerlich-von-daheim>> accessed 25 August 2024.

32 ‘...but also make a valuable contribution to the regional economy and the environment’; translated by the author. <<https://regionalschmecken.de>> accessed 25 August 2024.

33 Di Giovine and Brulotte: ‘Introduction: Food and Foodways as Cultural Heritage’, 2f.; Bendix, Regina F.: ‘Daily Bread, Global Distinction? The German Bakers’ Craft and Cultural Value-Enhancement Regimes’, in Brulotte, Ronda L. and Di Giovine, Michael A. eds.: *Edible Identities: Food as Cultural heritage* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2016), 185–200.

34 Di Giovine and Brulotte: ‘Introduction: Food and Foodways as Cultural Heritage’, 7.

35 Di Giovine and Brulotte: ‘Introduction: Food and Foodways as Cultural Heritage’, 7.

36 Di Giovine and Brulotte: ‘Introduction: Food and Foodways as Cultural Heritage’, 5, references Donna Gabaccia: *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Foods and the Making of Americans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), also in this context. The proverb is well-known in the German-speaking countries – and is double-bounded in the cultural and physical sense.

concept of home (BW 'from home'; SL 'country of home on the plate'). It refers to the dual nature of the human being.³⁷ This means that, on the one hand, food is a physiologically necessary component of the body, while, on the other hand, taste is a marker for insiders or outsiders in eating cultures.³⁸ Most of the campaigns share traditional recipes, or promotions for regional superfoods within the traditional cultures. Also, the essence of consumption is highlighted in many of the campaigns – for example: 'Im Saarland genießt man, wie es sich für ein Fleckchen Erde im Herzen Europas gehört.'³⁹ The unique (regional) taste and pleasure of eating ('Genuss') is linked to regional craftsmanship, quality, and trust. It is in this way that territorialisation and localisation, as part of an 'Alternative Food System', is to be achieved.

At first the campaigns look like a simple marketing strategy; and perhaps they are. Thus, these campaigns focus on the production of food in the areas of their federal states, which usually cover several regions. However, these regions are not necessarily only on the territory of one federal state – e.g. Allgaeu belongs to the federal states of Baden-Wuerttemberg and Bavaria. Regions like Allgaeu or the Black Forest usually have their own cultural identities. Thus, the term 'regional food' seems unsuitable for regional marketing purposes at first glance because the borders of the regions are not identical with the borders of the federal states. However, the concept of 'Alternative Food Systems' can dissolve the contradiction between regional borders and federal borders. 'Territorialisation' and 'localisation' are the main processes in the re-integration of the agri-business into social and cultural structures, with the goal to be 'embedded'. 'Localisation' has no direct area reference – unlike 'territorialisation'.⁴⁰

To summarise, all the campaigns in the federal states are dealing with elements of an 'Alternative Food System' reflecting (1) a natural or ecological and traditional way of food production; (2) high quality of, and trust in, regional food, and (3) ethnic food markers in the 'taste of home'.

37 Barlösius: *Soziologie des Essens*, 37ff.; Plessner, Helmuth, *Conditio Humana* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1983) (Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. VIII).

38 Di Giovine and Brulotte: 'Introduction: Food and Foodways as Cultural Heritage', 5.

39 'In the region of Saarland one can enjoy food as befits the heart of Europe', translated by the author.

40 Barlösius: *Soziologie des Essens*, 306f.

Re-creating common ethnic identity in regional food marketing

The widespread regional campaigns use more or less (German) terms such as 'Heimat' ['country of home' / 'homeland'] to address markers of heritage, thus creating and re-enforcing ethnic group identity.⁴¹ The BW campaign, for example, is suitable for in-depth analysis, since it explicitly states that this is the case: 'Regional Campaign: "Naturally. From Home."' Thus, the regional campaign should make this clear and tangible – 'behind every food is a family, every product has its own story.'⁴² In doing so, some of the campaigns rely on storytelling about the diversity of the regions – including their land, food, producers, and people, in order to (re)create a sense of home – possibly for migrants as well.

Taking the BW campaign as an example: there are 58 videos⁴³ about production companies (often manufactories) – for foodstuffs, such as bread and bakery products, eggs, vegetables, meat and sausages, milk and dairy products – with stories about the production of food over generations in the land of Baden-Wuerttemberg. The farmers and producers are depicted as being persons who ensure food security through their work and their craftsmanship. The focus is on the people as entrepreneurs or as the heads of food co-operatives who explain their relationship to the traditional production of their products, the integration into the nature of the region, the social benefits for the employees, and the high quality of the products (especially in terms of nature, freshness and health) for the consumers. The videos show that, and also depict how tradition is a guiding principle in the production of food, especially in manufactories. Thus, the manufactories preserve intangible cultural heritage for the use of the people living the region.

The campaigns show how a common identity can be (re-)created with the people in the regions. The stories in the videos are told from the perspective of the heads of the food-production enterprises and food co-operatives in the state of BW. However, the stories told by the storytellers include all of the others involved in food production

41 Di Giovine and Brulotte: 'Introduction: Food and Foodways as Cultural Heritage'.

42 Translated by the author ('Die Regionalkampagne soll deutlich und erlebbar machen – hinter jedem Lebensmittel steckt eine Familie, jedes Produkt hat seine Geschichte'). <<https://mlr.baden-wuerttemberg.de/de/unsere-themen/landwirtschaft/regionale-landwirtschaft/kampagne-natuerlich-von-daheim>> accessed 9 September 2024.

43 'Wir machen das' ('We do that'). <https://vondaheim.de/Lde/Startseite/Wir+machen+das_>, and <<https://vondaheim.de/Lde/Startseite/Kampagne/Wir+versorgen+unser+Land>> accessed 8 August 2024.

in the region: the employees as well as the consumers and citizens. For example, the head of the dairy in the video say:⁴⁴

Wir sind eine Aktiengesellschaft und gehören aber einer breiten Trägerschaft aus der Region dazu gehören also eben unseren Landwirten, unseren Mitarbeitern, Bürgern, [...], Kommunen und Verbänden, alle tragen quasi diese Existenz der Molkerei hier mit.⁴⁵

But in each video, there is only one entrepreneur – whose family has lived in the BW region for generations – who tells his or her story. Other perspectives – such as those of consumers or employees or citizens – are much more heterogeneous, but they are not the storytellers in the videos. This means that groups such as immigrants do not have the possibility to tell their stories – to show what regional food means to them. On the other hand, the concept of the regional campaigns – to get the stories of the people and families – offers more opportunities for the involvement of such groups in the regions and also the possibility for showing the diversity of regions today. Nevertheless, each video does refer to the social impact of the campaigns on everybody in the villages and regions. On the individual level, consumers taste the region ('unique taste').⁴⁶ At least, the videos promote the traditional quality (taste, health, naturalness) of the region and the way in which rural tradition can have a sustainable future. In summary, the analysis has shown that food is used as heritage in the sense of Di Giovine and Brulotte.⁴⁷ Rural regions use their potential to preserve intangible cultural heritage and to offer 'edible identities' for all the people in the region.⁴⁸

44 Dorfkäserei Geifertshofen, Bühlerzell. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xqdfi6FTlug>> (Minute 1:14-bis 1:30) accessed 8 August 2024.

45 Dorfkäserei Geifertshofen, Bühlerzell, 2024. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xqdfi6FTlug&list=PLCC4IbDiXOzRDaGSKfmcYIHPtR0mtDw&index=3>> (Minute 1:08) accessed 8 August 2024. 'We are a public limited company, but we are owned by a broad range of people from the region, including our farmers, our employees, citizens, [...], local authorities and associations, all of whom contribute to the dairy's existence here, so to speak.' (Translated by the author).

46 Dorfkäserei Geifertshofen, Bühlerzell, (Minute 1:08), accessed 8 August 2024.

47 Di Giovine and Brulotte: 'Introduction. Food and Foodways as Cultural Heritage', 21.

48 Di Giovine and Brulotte: 'Introduction. Food and Foodways as Cultural Heritage', 21; Höflechner, Thomas and Meyer, Jonas: 'Nachhaltigkeit und Regionen – Die Renaissance ländlicher Räume?' ('Sustainability and regions – The renaissance of rural areas?'), in Friedrich Zimmermann, ed., *Nachhaltigkeit wofür? Von Chancen und Herausforderungen für eine nachhaltige Zukunft* ('What is sustainability for? Opportunities and challenges for a sustainable future') (Berlin: Springer, 2016), 147–171.

CONCLUSION

The marketing campaigns examined in this study deal with elements of tradition, sustainability, and trust in regional foodstuffs, as well as with a healthy diet. Finally, the results of the campaigns are all examples which can be attributed to the 'Alternative Food Systems' and are part of an embedded economy. As such, they are relevant to the question of what possibilities of identification they open up in societies with heterogeneous social structures. These campaigns show how a common identity can be (re-)created with the people in the regions. In the case of the BW campaign, it is the story told from the perspective of the heads of the enterprises and co-operatives in the land. Although, the stories include nearly all the people in the region such as employees and consumers, only the heads of the companies are storytellers. Therefore, the adoption of the campaign concept would offer more opportunities for the showing of the diversity of people and thus, also, the diversity of regional food identities. These results will inspire nutritional and consumer education to engage in a deeper form of dialogue about the concepts of 'regional' and 'seasonal' and to be part of a new culinary order.⁴⁹

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⁴⁹ Barlösius: *Soziologie des Essens*, 312.

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KARIN VANEKER

CROSS-BORDER CUISINE: FOOD CULTURE AND HERITAGE IN THE *EUREGIO*

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the shared past and segregated present of Low German food culture in the *Euregio*, Europe's first Euregion. Specifically, it highlights the cross-border history of heritage foods such as *Heißwecken* or *krentenwegge*, *Mettwurst* or *metworst*, and *M/moos* in Westmünsterland (region Westphalia) and the adjacent Dutch region of Twente.

BACKGROUND

Borders and languages are formal and informal dividing lines between territories, jurisdictions, and peoples.¹ The Germany-Netherlands border is about 570 km in extent. From the North Sea to the tripoint between Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands, the dividing line is the result of numerous wars, disputes, agreements and treaties such as the Peace of Westphalia (1648) and the Congress of Vienna (1814–1815). In the 19th and 20th centuries, 'old' and new nations used language and food to display the uniqueness and authenticity of their territory. In the German-Dutch borderland, nation-building divided the 'shared experiences' and foodways of ethnic groups.² After World War II, Belgium, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and West Germany sought to prevent war, destitution, and famine through unification. In the wake of the Treaty of Rome (1957), the nations established the

1 Reference to this study: Karin Vaneker: Cross-border Cuisine: Food Culture and Heritage in the *Euregio*. In Anikó Báti and Patricia Lysaght (eds.): *Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage*. Budapest: ELTE RCH Institute of Ethnology – Museum of Ethnography, 2025. pp. 177–190.

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2 Pekelder, J. – Simal, J.L. – Stienen, D.B. and Tarafás, I.: 'State-building and Nationalism in Modern History (ca. 1800–1900)', in J. Hansen ed.: *The European Experience. A Multi-Perspective History of Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2023), 275–284.

European Economic Community (EEC). In 1958 the German-Dutch *Euregio* became Europe's first cross-border initiative to unify people, communities, and regions. Since the inception of the European Union (EU) (1993), similar initiatives have established over 100 'Euregions' in 27 EU member states and their neighbouring countries. Among other things, these frameworks aim to safeguard and protect food heritage, but they commonly fail to acknowledge that transnational communities share the language of food. Or, as an EEC policy brief states, 'Food heritage does not reflect national borders.'³

HISTORY

Today, the *Euregio* encompasses 129 municipalities and regional governments. Since 1985, its headquarters are located at the Gronau-Enschede border crossing, between the regions Westphalia and Twente. Gronau is the second biggest city in Westmünsterland with a population of about 50,000, while the adjacent Enschede is Twente's largest city with over 160,000 residents. The transnational history of Westmünsterland and Twente is reflected in their natural environment, linguistic heritage, and foodways. The rather flat and rural area is part of the European Sand Belt, a formerly glaciated area with widespread areas of ground moraine and outwash. Early farming emerged during the Neolithic and included hunting and fishing, animal husbandry, and small patches of primitive cereals in forests. From the Iron Age until the start of the Middle Ages, forest farming was common, with foliage and 'tree hay' from ash (*Fraxinus*) and ivy (*Hedera helix*) used as animal fodder. From the start of the Common Era, cereals such as rye, spelt, and oats were grown on arable land and domestic animals grazed in meadows. Cattle, sheep, horses, pigs, and goats were fed hay as winter fodder. Until the late Middle Ages, settlement pressure and deforestation resulted in a landscape scattered with raised bogs and wetlands, with meadows on dry and wet soils, winter rye on better-drained soils, buckwheat on the poorest land, and commercial oak forests for timber, fuel, hunting, and pannage.⁴ Until modern times, the rural area heavily depended on subsistence

3 European Policy Brief, CoHERE: 'Food as Heritage' (European Commission, Ares [2019]1263186 – 25/02/2019).

4 Hüppe, J. and Pott, R.: 'Die Hudelandschaften Nordwestdeutschlands' ('Wood pasture landscapes of northwest Germany'), *Abhandlungen aus dem Westfälischen Provinzial-Museum für Naturkunde* 53 1/2 (1991); Beinlich, B. – van Rehmen, K. – Hill, B.T. and Poschold, P.: 'Das Schwein als Wegbegleiter des Menschen – ein kulturhistorischer Überblick' ('The pig as a companion of man – a cultural-historical overview'), *NNA-Berichte* 18/2 (2005), 4–11.

farming based on labour from humans and livestock, with variable annual yields.⁵ Initially based on the local production of flax, the textile industry flourished from the mid-19th century until well into the 20th century, and common cross-border activities included corporate co-operation, trade, labour migration, and smuggling. Since the decline of the textile industry in the 1970s and 1980s, the border has lost its significance as a dividing line. Simultaneously, the revival of economic, social, and cultural relationships has resulted in a daily stream of trucks carrying typical Dutch and German agricultural goods and foods across the *Euregio* border. Each day, numerous inhabitants of the region cross the border for study, work, shopping and leisure. As a result, most border crossers are familiar with each other's language, culture, and foodways. Still, their shared food heritage is commonly not acknowledged, with dishes defined either as German or Dutch, Twents, or Westphalian.⁶

HE WHO GOVERNS THE TERRITORY DECIDES ITS FOODWAYS

Westmünsterland and Twente's shared documented history begins with the Saxon Wars (772–804). The forced conversion of the Saxons to Christianity by Charlemagne (c.742–814) drastically altered the lives of the Low-Germanic-speaking peoples. The Frankish ruler partitioned his realm into missionary districts, governmental entities, and dioceses, including Utrecht (est. c.777) and Münster (est. c.805). The bishops of these dioceses were answerable to the metropolitan archbishop of the Cologne ecclesiastical province. The Westmünsterland-Twente area is first mentioned in Carolingian documents of abbeys and monasteries, including from Prüm, Werden, and Damenstift Vreden, which kept records of their properties and revenue from lands, farms, and estates. While the Saxons assimilated into their new faith with the sacrament of the Eucharist and the custom of saying grace for their daily bread, innovations such as three-field rotation, cattle power, and metal technologies improved cereal harvests and contributed to a 'cerealization' of high medieval

5 Beek, R. van – Gouw-Bouman, M.T.I.J. and Bos, J.A.A.: 'Mapping regional vegetation developments in Twente (the Netherlands) since the Late Glacial and evaluating contemporary settlement patterns', *Netherlands Journal of Geosciences* 94 (2015), 229–255; Meures-Balke, J. and Kalis, A.J.: 'Landnutzung in Prähistorischer und Historischer Zeit im Vredener Land' ('Land use in prehistoric and historical times in the Vredener Land'), *Beiträge des Heimatsvereins Vreden zur Landes und Volkskunde* 69 (2005), 83–90.

6 Porciani, I. ed.: *Food Heritage and Nationalism in Europe* (Abingdon-on-Thames, UK: Routledge, 2020), 4–6.

society.⁷ With bread and wine and commensality at the core of religion, the Christian liturgical calendar with abstinence, fasting, and feasting had a profound effect on eating habits and the consumption of gruel, pancakes and breads.⁸ By the High Middle Ages, Westmünsterland and Twente formed the border between the prince-bishoprics of Münster and Utrecht. To till the fields, peasants used the plow, and cereal harvests were typically ground in water-powered mills. Grain's storability allowed for the emergence of towns with artisan and merchant guilds and the expansion of the Hanseatic League or Hanse (c.1158–1669). This transnational trade network influenced the development of the Low German language and the culinary traditions of northern Europe with commodities such as salt, wheat, herring, and spices, and products such as beer, wine, and butter.⁹

BAD LANGUAGE?

The earliest form of Low German, Old Saxon (Old Low German), is generally regarded as closely related to Old English (Anglo-Frisian). Old Saxon writing was mainly restricted to monasteries until about 1050, and was first written down in monastic texts such as *Genesis* and *Heliand*, a poem narrating the life of Jesus.¹⁰ From around 1200 onwards, Old Saxon evolved into Middle Low German, gradually becoming the lingua franca of the Hanse. By the 15th century, the forerunner of Modern Low German dominated nearly all writing and reduced the use of Latin to the internal sphere of the church and science. After the Protestant Reformation and fall of the Hanse, High German slowly replaced written Low German; by the 18th century (Age of Enlightenment), Low German had lost all status and was considered the tongue of backward peasants.¹¹ In the Dutch Republic (1579–1795), the restraints of Calvinist philosophy banned eating from public life and reinforced a plain and frugal diet. Concurrently, Holland's Golden Age provided fertile ground for a united

7 Bartlett, R.: *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization, and Cultural Change, 950–1350* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 152–156.

8 Albala, K. and Eden, T. eds.: *Food & Faith in Christian Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 7–19; Jones, M.: *Feast: Why Humans Share Food* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 251–274.

9 Jahnke, C.: 'The Baltic Trade', in Harreld, D. J. ed.: *A Companion to the Hanseatic League* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 194–240.

10 Breitbarth, A.: 'Negation in the history of Low German and Dutch', in D. Willis, C. Lucas, and A. Breitbarth, eds., *The History of Negation in the Languages of Europe and the Mediterranean, volume I: case studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 190–238.

11 Breitbarth: 'Negation in the history of Low German and Dutch'; Langer, N., 'Low German', *Journal of Germanic Linguistics* 16/4 (2004), 281–301.

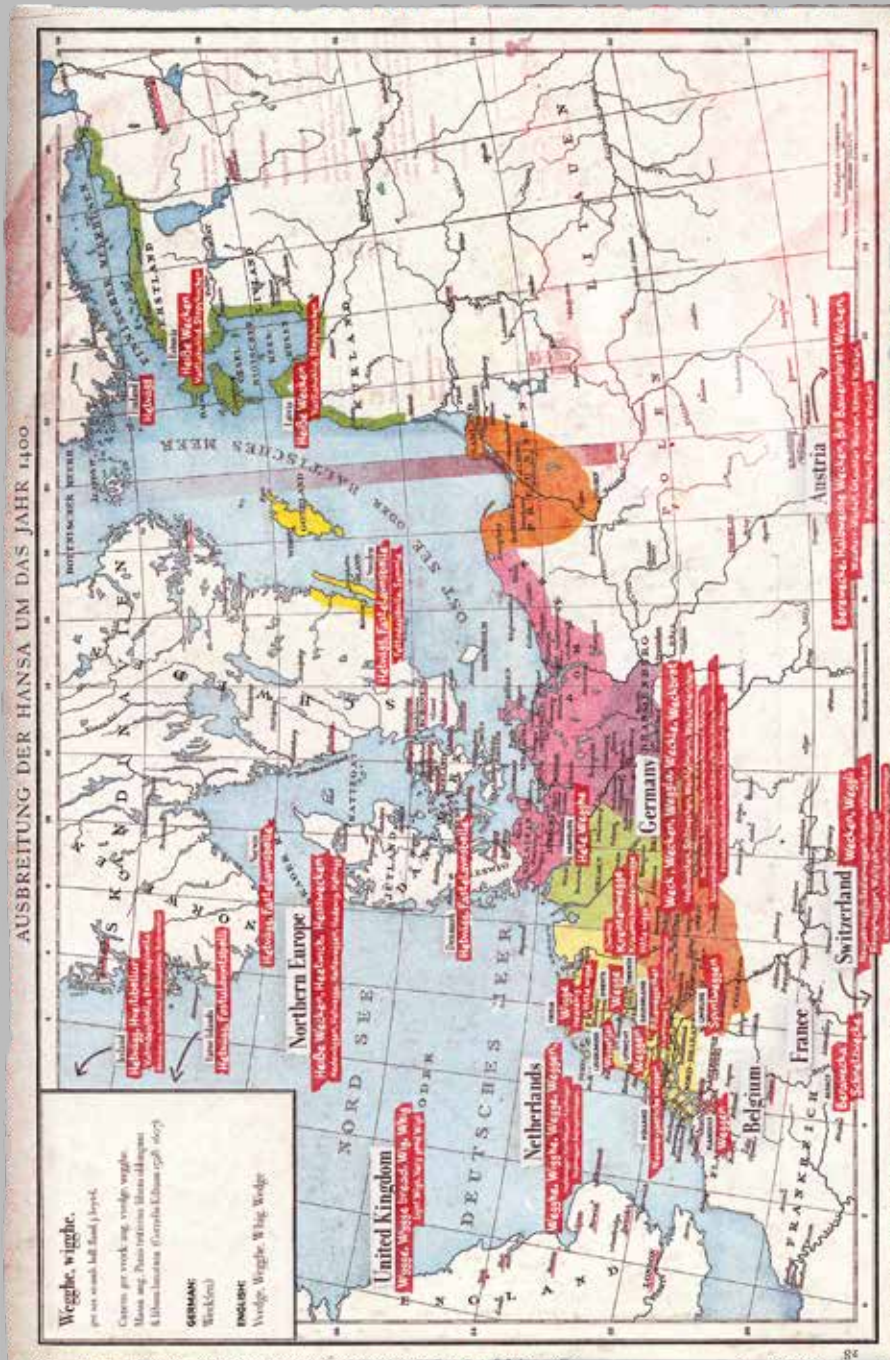


Fig. 1. From 'wegghe, whigghe' to Weck(en) and wegde. (Illustration: Frank Bemthuis)

Dutch language. After the defeat of Napoleon, the Congress of Vienna created new German and Dutch nations. German nation-building put Germanness back on agendas and was rooted in medieval traditions, including processions, masses, banquets, and feeding the poor. Meanwhile, in the Netherlands, the Belgian secession (1830) resulted in a national crisis about Dutchness and an expansion of economic, scientific, and cultural ties with the Germans. The great social changes in the 19th century created opportunities for German and Dutch middle-class women to provide domestic education. The multitude of recipes from elite cookbooks and oral tradition were written down in text and household cookbooks. Men lent prestige to elite cuisines, such as French culinary culture, with historical and linguistic descriptions of banquets, food, and produce. Cuisines that did not meet the standards were labelled as primitive or backward. Even before World War II, Low German culture was embraced by German and Dutch pan-Germanists and folklorists as being part of the greater Germanic ideology and National Socialist context. Post war, the ideas, myths, and beliefs became firmly rooted in culture and institutions.¹² From the 1960s onwards, institutionalised language purism led to a massive erosion of Low German culture and dialects. However, since 1992, Low Saxon is protected and promoted by a European treaty, and nowadays it is spoken by about 1.8 million Dutch and 2.5 million Germans. Nonetheless, the debate about its low status continues.¹³

LOW GERMAN CULINARY HERITAGE

From the 1600s onwards, large numbers of Protestant Low Germans migrated to the New World for religious or economic reasons.¹⁴ Migrants speaking Hamburger and other Low German dialects contributed many words and foods to the all-American cuisine, including cake, cook, cookie, hamburger, headcheese, mettwurst, waffle, and wiggs or wedges.¹⁵ Cuisines in Westmünsterland and Twente were similarly

12 Ginkel, R. van and Henkes, B.: 'On peasants and "primitive peoples": moments of rapprochement and distance between folklore studies and anthropology in the Netherlands', *Ethnos* 68/1 (2003), 112–134.

13 Adler, A.: 'Language, or Dialect, That Is the Question. How Attitudes Affect Language Statistics Using the Example of Low German', *Languages* 6 (2021); Braat, E.: 'Low Saxon in the Netherlands: Efforts put into protecting, promoting and stimulating the language after signing covenant "Nedersaksisch"' (Tilburg University, M.A. Thesis, 2020).

14 Vaneker, K.: 'Mrs. Vanderbilt's Puffert: How Humble Dutch Fare Climbed Up the American Social Ladder', *Food, Culture & Society* 17/3 (2014), 451–472.

15 Long, L. M.: 'American Cuisine, Existence Of', in Thompson, P.B. and Kaplan, D.M. eds.: *Encyclopedia of Food and Agricultural Ethics* (New York: Springer, 2014), 121–129.

shaped by geography, dialects, conflicts, and religion. For centuries, eating habits such as praying for the daily bread or gruel, and monotonous one-pot meals of local grains, cabbages, root vegetables and a little pork, ruled the rural area. Midwinter, Carnival, and Easter feasts included sausages, pancakes, eggs, waffles, and refined breads. During the Reformation, the life of peasants and commoners deteriorated through epidemics, bad harvests, spiking cereal prices, and armed conflicts. In 1592 Pope Clement VIII erected the Holland Mission to protect the Catholic faith and, from 1672 to 1678, the prince-bishop of Münster waged war with his Dutch Calvinist arch-enemy. He built Catholic mission stations along Westmünsterland's border to supply religious care for Dutch Catholics. The downfall of the Dutch Republic in 1795 brought about religious freedom, but in the newly-minted kingdom, institutional discrimination against Catholics continued. From 1848 to 1984, a law banned public Catholic processions, funerals, and feasts such as Carnival, Easter, and Midwinter.¹⁶ Simultaneously, quintessential foods and dishes such as *Heißwecken* or *krentenwegge*, *Mettwurst* or *metwurst*, and *M/moos* came to reflect national, regional, religious, personal, and commercial values. The entangled histories of the pastries or breads, pork sausages, and borecole or curly kale shows that ideas about food, faith, and language do not reflect borders. The intensity of German-Dutch encounters shows the fluidity of borderland cuisines and on-going developments such as globalisation, localisation, and heritagization.

TWENTSE KRENTENWEGGE AND HEISSWECKEN

Highly abstract philosophical questions, such as transubstantiation, dominated the Reformation. The transformation of consecrated wheat bread into the body of Christ is invisible, yet the question of faith caused a split between Catholics and Protestants who saw the body of Christ as nourishment for spiritual life. Faith also drove a wedge between Easter and Christmas loaves and rolls with and without currants, but these issues did not hinder their consumption, nor the spread of this culinary legacy across the Hanse. In the entire Hanseatic region and beyond, the Low German word *wig* or *wegge* unites a large family of pastries, breads, and rolls. From an elite bun or small cake of fine flour, the *wig*, *wigge*, or *wegge* became a wedge-shaped cake and evolved into pastry for both the bourgeoisie and the urban and rural poor.¹⁷ Since the late Middle Ages, *Heißwecken* (lit. 'hot wedges') are sweet rolls, eaten warm to mark the

¹⁶ <<https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Processieverbod> (Procession ban)> accessed 25 April 2024.

¹⁷ Kiliaen, C.: *Etymologicum teutonicae linguae* (Den Haag: Mouton, Den Haag, 1599, ed. 1972).

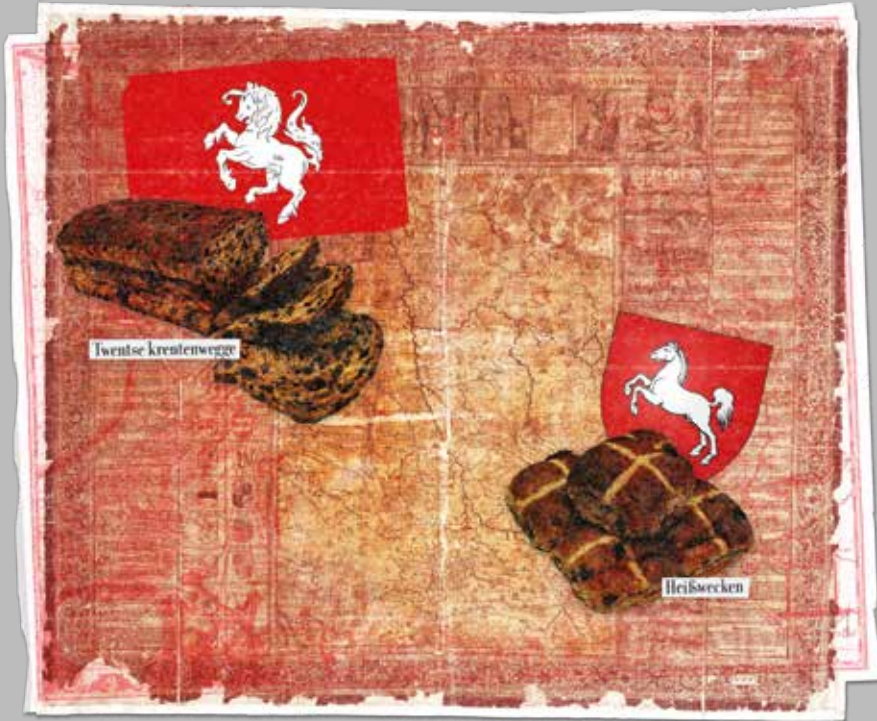


Fig. 2. Twentse Ros & 'wegge' | Sachsenross & Wecken. (Illustration: Frank Bemthuis)

end of Carnival and the start of pre-Easter fasting in northern Europe. Despite Calvinists denouncing the pleasures of commensality, by the 19th century, currant rolls and giant currant loaves had become a popular pastry in rural Twente. Traditionally served at festive occasions such as births, the *Twentse krentenwegge* became a well-known bread across the Netherlands in 1938, when a Twentse baker brought a loaf to Queen Juliana upon the birth of her daughter Beatrix of the Netherlands. As the regional symbol par excellence, since July 2023, the National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage recognises its significance for Dutch culture, tourism, and government sectors.¹⁸

'SHORT PRAYER, LONG METTWURST'

The traditional Low German saying 'Kort Gebet, lange Mettwurst' sums up the fantasies and dreams of a perfect life without long prayers and short sausages. Traditionally, the Shrovetide's 'vastel-avent' ('fast-evening') is celebrated with pancakes with mettwurst. From the 15th century onwards, the sausage from chopped pork meat is listed as the Low German compound word 'Metworst' or 'Mettwurst'.¹⁹ In *Praktisches Kochbuch* ('Practical Cookbook', 1849), the German-Dutch author Henriette Davidis (1801–1876) explicitly stated that Westphalian Mett- or Bratwurst is made of marbled pork mixed with bits of fatty pork cut into small dices or cubes, not chopped or minced, to keep the sausages intended for smoking juicier. Up to 1942, her bestseller was reprinted 62 times, and from 1876 onward, translations of her reference work were adapted to the cultural environments of the Netherlands and the United States.²⁰ In Davidis' time, 'Met/t', 'Mettwurst' and 'Bratwurst' were already a large German family of chopped meats and fresh and smoked sausages. In the Netherlands 'braadworst' became the Dutch word for fresh sausages, while the term 'boerenmetworst' is used to highlight the farmers' (*boeren*) custom to smoke sausages. Both in Westmünsterland and Twente the word *Moos* means a dish of borecole, potatoes and (met)worst, but its preparation is divided by the German-Dutch border: in Westmünsterland ingredients like borecole and potatoes are recognisable, while in Twente they are mashed into a mash together,

18 Krentewegge from Twente <www.immaterieelerfgoed.nl/en/twentse-krentenwegge> accessed 25 April 2024.

19 Grzega, J.: 'Meat and Meta-Linguistic Sources – European Examples of Achieving Better Etymological Chronologies', *Journal for EuroLinguistiX* 17 (2020), 15–21.

20 Heinzelmänn, U.: *Beyond Bratwurst: A History of Food in Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).



Fig 3. Moos (*L. Brassica oleracea*) & Mettwurst. (Illustration: Frank Bemthuis)

following the Dutch ‘stampot’ habit of mashing potatoes with vegetables in one pot. In fact, ‘stampot ‘boerenkool’ has become an iconic national dish of the Netherlands, and a symbol of its bourgeois cuisine.²¹ The humble hotchpotch²² of mashed potatoes and borecole with a smoked sausage on top, is believed to be of medieval Holland origin, but in the confederal Dutch Republic, Holland was a sovereign state with Hollandic dialects. Regarding Dutch and English claims that their superior raw materials need no elaborate cooking techniques, Stephen Mennell concluded that ‘the argument does not hold water.’²³ The desire to have a culinary identity in the Dutch kingdom shows that wishful thinking and food fantasies can result in confusion, incorrect chronologies and interpretations of Dutch cuisine. The national cuisine of the Netherlands was heavily influenced by fundamental distrust and puritanical views on culinary refinement – unlike in Germany, where the greater variety of cuisines and dishes have been absorbed into an overarching food culture and ‘German’ cuisine.²⁴ The food culture in the Low German borderland of Twente and Westmünsterland reflects the history of nations, languages, and borders. The marketing and promotion of their intangible culinary heritage as being uniquely Dutch, German, Twents or Westphalian, supports banal nationalism.²⁵

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23 Mennell: ‘Eten in Nederland’ (‘Eating in the Netherlands’).

24 Heinzlmann: *Beyond Bratwurst: A History of Food in Germany*.

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REGINA SEXTON

WHEN ONE STORY WILL DO: THE HERITAGISATION OF WILD GARLIC IN IRELAND

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the rise in the profile, presence and heritagisation of wild garlic (*Allium ursinum*) in Ireland since the late twentieth century. It considers how an era-contained representation of the plant was developed in response to external influences and used in identity-formation linked to ideas of Irish environmental purity, exceptionalism, and a romantic Celtic-Gaelic mystique.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years wild garlic has undergone a process of heritagisation in Ireland within certain socio-demographic food communities.¹ Intermeshed in this process are the influences of food and culinary fashions, themselves often the product of collaborative and collective food movements, together with more recent existential threats linked to environmental degradation, globalisation and modern food systems. Navigating these macro-change complexities through an evocation of food in/of the past is perceived as a means of restoring stability to self, community and locality in the face of global insecurities. To-date, however, engagement with the plant's historical past has been cursory, producing an idealised and highly romanticised identity that is stuck somewhere in prehistoric and medieval Ireland and one that is heavily and overly reliant on the work of the scholars A.T. Lucas² and Fergus Kelly.³ This

1 Reference to this study: Regina: When One Story Will Do: The Heritagisation of Wild Garlic in Ireland. In Anikó Bádi and Patricia Lysaght (eds.): *Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage*. Budapest: ELTE RCH Institute of Ethnology – Museum of Ethnography, 2025. pp. 191–206.

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2 Lucas, A.T.: 'Irish Food Before the Potato', *Gwerin* 3/2 (1960), 8–43.

3 Kelly, Fergus: *Early Irish Farming: a study based mainly on law-texts of the 7th and 8th centuries AD*, (Dublin: School of Celtic Studies. Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1997).

fragmented capture of the past has limited social good outside domains that benefit most from its creation. These developments prompt the questions: what does heritage do, who creates it, and how did a particular episteme for wild garlic develop and influence the plant's heritage status?

This paper aims to answer these questions by engaging with folk narratives, and media coverage of wild garlic in Irish newspapers from the mid-nineteenth century. The plant's representation in cookery books will be considered alongside insights provided by chef-proprietor Denis Cotter, who was one of the first in Ireland to bring the plant to a public forum through his writings⁴ and through cookery in the vegetarian restaurant, Paradiso, in Cork City (Fig. 1). The paper will also explore how selective recourse to food in the past is one symptomatic response to a convergence of multiple postmodern food anxieties in the different eras of globalisation, particularly the implications of the rapid rate of change in the third and fourth waves, and within this frame, it will be argued the heritagisation of wild garlic can be taken as a dense example of reflexive modernity.

WILD GARLIC IN TWENTIETH FIRST-CENTURY IRELAND: RETRIEVING AND REVIVING ITS PAST LIVES

Since the late twentieth century, interest in wild garlic, which is now positioned as a leading representative of traditional wild foods and 'a gateway drug for the novice forager',⁵ to prompt engagement with a wider range of edible wild plants, has grown incrementally with a significant peak in interest from the early 2000s. This upsurge in interest is well represented in print media where interest in the plant has moved to performative and experiential realms of cooking (with wild garlic pesto a near iconic preparation) and wild garlic encounters in restaurant, foraging, and Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) contexts. Of note is the overlap in connection-making and the rise of social media. Here wild garlic is a vibrant model of kitchen, woodland and restaurant scenes in the creation of 'Instagram-able' simulacra. Within this period, wild garlic has been constructively positioned as not only the poster-boy of wild foods but platformed as a symbolic representative of an essential Irish food tradition rooted in the antiquity of the historical and pre-historic pasts. This development has

4 Cotter, Denis: *Wild Garlic, Gooseberries and Me* (London: Collins, 2007).

5 McMahon, Jp.: *An Alphabet of Anair: Notes for a New Irish Cuisine* (Galway: Godot Press, 2023), 203.



*Fig. 1. Potato gnocchi, wild garlic sauce, fried nettles, pistachio. Paradiso, Cork City.
(Reproduced by kind permission of Denis Cotter)*

been cultivated and supported by food writers⁶ and chefs⁷ and associated communities of consumers whose knowledge of food goes beyond gastronomy and into the cultural realm that is often captured in productions of the plant's 'story'.

On one level, engagement with wild garlic can be viewed as a means of building gastro-cultural capital. However, this development is a multi-layered phenomenon shaped by food movements and counter movements and flecked by a complex entanglement of postmodern societal concerns. In these grand narratives, the heritagisation of wild plant foods, here specifically wild garlic, is one small but energetic expression of attempts at re-evaluating food systems and reforming food connections at personal, community and societal levels. Essentially, the case of wild garlic and its re-imagining is an Irish example of broader food trends⁸ that are common to certain demographics in the global north, where a re-consideration of food in the past encapsulates opposition to the impact of successive waves of globalisation on local food systems. In unravelling the complexities of different waves of globalisation – economic, cultural, and digital – wild garlic is cast in multiple allegorical and thematic narratives (decline and revival; lost and found; local/traditional and global/modern; local heterogeneity and global cultural homogeneity). These roles are performed in traditional and digital media and in wild-centric activities like foraging, wild food cookery, and wild food events.⁹

The intentional re-visiting of the past lives of wild edible plants was popularised in the 1970s with the publication of Richard Mabey's *Food for Free*, a work built in part

6 For instance, Fitzgibbon, Theodora: *Irish Traditional Food* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1983); Mahon, Brid: *Land of Milk and Honey; The Story of Traditional Irish Food and Drink* (Dublin: Poolbeg, 1991); Connery, Claire: *In an Irish Country Kitchen* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1992); Sexton, Regina: 'Wild about Foraging,' *The Irish Examiner* (26 October 2011), 17.

7 For instance, Allen, Darina: *Irish Traditional Cookery* (London: Kyle Cathie, 1995); Allen, Darina: 'It will suit you to a tea; [section] wild food,' *The Irish Examiner* (22 May 2010), 25; Cotter, Denis: *Wild Garlic, Gooseberries and Me*; White-Lennon, Biddy and Doyle, Evan: *Wild Food: Nature's Harvest: How to Gather, Cook and Preserve* (Dublin: The O'Brien Press, 2013); McMahon, Jp.: *An Alphabet of Aniar: Notes for a New Irish Cuisine* (Galway: Godot Press, 2023); McMahon, Jp.: *The Irish Cook Book* (London/New York: Phaidon Press, 2020); McMahon, Jp.: *An Irish Food Story: 100 Foods That Made Us* (Dublin: Nine Bean Rows Books, 2024).

8 A similar trend is evident in the UK. See, for example: 'It's wild garlic season. Again. But what are you actually meant to do with it?', *Independent* (8 April 2025); 'Excessive foraging for wild garlic and mushrooms in UK 'a risk to wildlife', *The Guardian* (13 May 2023), and the slightly more sardonic, 'City folk go wild for wild garlic,' *The Spectator* (11 April 2024).

9 Media representations range from descriptions of foraging and cooking, often accompanied by history notes and the pleasures of connections with nature; for instance, *The Northern Standard* (6 May 2010), 8; *The Irish Examiner* (26 October 2011), 17; *The Irish Independent* (18 February 2013), 27; *The Munster Express* (26 April 2013), 22; *The Connaught Telegraph* (12 April 2016), 29; *The Sunday Independent* (6 March 2022), 38–40.

on an inheritance of traditional knowledge from multiple sources and written in a time of growing environmental awareness.¹⁰ This book was a pioneering publication that spoke to the zeitgeist of the time and pre-empted the more recent fashion for artisanal foraging. Selling an estimated one million copies, its influence on models of thinking related to wild foods that blend into heritage a mix of history and tradition in serving present-day concerns, should not be underestimated. There followed in 1978 an Irish publication, *Wild and Free*, by Cyril and Kit Ó Céirín that served as a more practical guide to collecting, cooking and preserving wild plant foods. This publication includes a range of wild plants with an enduring connection to traditional Irish foodways as evidenced in the overlap in the Ó Céirín work and the data in the National Folklore Collection (NFC).¹¹ Significantly, there is no mention of wild garlic in *Wild and Free* nor does it feature as a plant of culinary significance in the folklife material of the NFC. The NFC Main Manuscript Collection and the Schools' Collection preserve extraordinarily rich data relating to Irish folklore and folklife collected from the 1930s. Here wild garlic is not recorded as a culinary item; rather it is remembered only for its human and animal medicinal uses, and to a lesser extend it is highlighted as a problematic plant that taints the taste of milk and butter if consumed by cows.

By the early decades of the twentieth century wild garlic did not hold any significant or distinctive culinary role in practice or memory. In this regard it could be argued that as an item of the wild and outside of conventional consumption patterns, its food-use may have gone unrecorded – remaining silent in record but alive in practice as a marginalised outside-of-systems-activity. Yet, it is reasonable to expect to find some traces, however slim, of its culinary uses in the folklore material, in the same way that these accounts hold memory of other wild-plant foods. Furthermore, data collected from the Irish Newspaper Archive¹² between 1845 and the 1940s resonates with its representation in folk accounts in addressing almost exclusively its medicinal properties and butter/milk-tainting characteristics. In the newspapers, there are just a few references to memories of its use as a food¹³ and as a [cultivated] garlic-

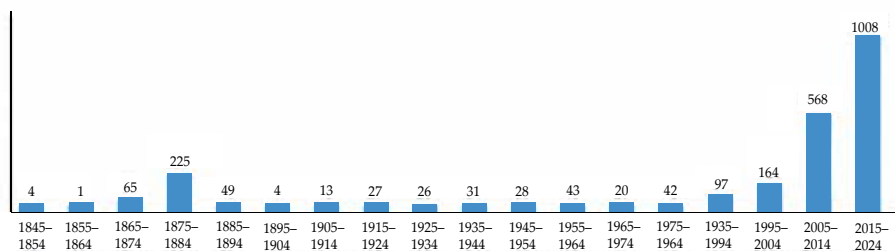
10 Mabey, Richard: *Food for Free* (London: Collins, 1972). Mabey's work built on inheritance from historical sources – for example, *Flora Diaetetica* by Charles Bryant, published in 1783, and a wartime UK Government's leaflet, *Hedgerow Harvest*, of 1943 (London: Ministry of Food 1943).

11 Ó Céirín, Cyril and Kit: *Wild and Free* (Dublin: The O'Brien Press, 1978). Of note, in terms of the overlap between the Ó Céirín work and the NFC data are the uses of watercress, nettles, sorrel, dandelions, field mushrooms, wild apples, blackberries, bilberries and seaweeds, in traditional Irish foodways, detailed in the NFC.

12 See Irish Newspaper Archives.

13 *The Irish Press* (17 November 1936), 15.

substitute,¹⁴ and there are anecdotal accounts of its role as an ‘ancient food’¹⁵ but these may simply reflect popular interest in Irish history, particularly as influenced by cultural and political movements that tended to inflate Ireland’s Celtic and Gaelic pasts.



Tabl. 1. Newspaper coverage of wild garlic from 117 national and regional newspapers from 1845 to 2024 leading to 2435 results. The peak from the 1860 to the 1880s relates to advertising for a commercial powder used to remove the taste of wild garlic from butter. The significant upsurge in coverage from the late 20th century represents food and cookery columns that mix recipes with antiquity, nature and seasonality elements. (Source: Irish Newspaper Archive database)

In practice, the erosion of the plant’s culinary role was part of an overall decline in assigning value to wild foods. Therefore, it is of note that newspaper references to the culinary uses of wild garlic began to appear from the 1970s¹⁶ at a time when the publications by Mabey and Ó Céirín were influencing those interested in the food-nature-environment-connections and those concerned with the socio-environmental impacts of the productivist model of food production. Attention to the plant in these accounts focused on the novel element of consuming wild plants, especially from the economic perspective of their ‘free’ status, and there is a call to venture into hedgerows and woodlands.¹⁷ Treatment of wild garlic had not yet evolved into the provision of recipes, with food, cookery and gardening writers simply encouraging experimentation at a time when it is imagined, that the Irish palate was just coming to terms with the use and taste of cultivated garlic, as it overcame prejudice against its pungency and its ‘overuse amongst foreigners’¹⁸

¹⁴ *The Irish Times* (3 May 1930), 3.

¹⁵ See, for instance, *The Southern Star* (17 December 1921), 3; *The Belfast Newsletter* (26 May 1926), 10; *The Donegal Democrat* (23 August 1941), 2.

¹⁶ *The Irish Independent* (Tuesday, 12 July 1977), 8.

¹⁷ See, for instance, *The Irish Independent* (Tuesday, 12 July 1977), 8; *The Clare Champion* (Friday, 2 September 1983), 27, and *The Irish Press* (24 November 1984), 7.

¹⁸ See, for instance, in this regard, *The Irish Independent* (3 July 1984), 7, and *The Clare Champion* (7 September 1984), 8.

In restaurants, wild garlic was also overlooked outside of a few select establishments¹⁹ that aligned to a local and seasonal food ethos.²⁰ By the late 20th century, wild in the context of restaurant food was associated predominantly with wild salmon, wild duck, wild mussels, wild boar, and wild plant foods that were often categorised as collectives – wildflowers and wild berries.²¹ By this time, too, the everyday practice of collecting wild food was a thing of the past and, if practiced at all, it was directed largely at blackberries and field mushrooms with limited coastal collection of seaweed. The decline in food and culinary connections to wild plants brought about an erosion in knowledge and skills required in identifying and using wild resources, even amongst rural communities who exercised caution and suspicion around all but the most identifiable and trusted wild-plant foods. Although by the 1980s, the novelty of a lamb, wild garlic, tansy, and earth nuts dish, created for the 1984 *Córas Beostoic agus Feola* ('Irish Livestock and Meat Board'), and the *Bord Fáilte* ('Irish Tourism Board') sponsored cookery competition, 'A Taste of Ireland', prompted the appearance of an *Irish Independent* newspaper column under the headline: 'Making a meal out of a new taste experience.'²² The inclusion of wild garlic in the dish was clearly intended to create a sense of identity for Irish food in serving industry and tourism, but the column itself is concerned with the unsettling turnover of food fashions since the 1970s. At a subliminal level, the reference to wild garlic serves to amplify the significant scale and pace of change to food systems that had occurred since the post-World War 2 period, with the emergence of a policy, technology, and a science-based model of production.

The cultural and counter-cultural expressions of these changes infiltrated consumer, media, health, industry and culinary realms, with discourse often set around feelings of insecurity and distrust,²³ and anchored in culture-turn academic polemics of

19 For example, in county Cork, Assolas Country House, and Ballymaloe Country House, and see also following note.

20 See, for instance, *The Irish Times* (4 May 1991), 10.

21 See in this context the *Bridgestone Irish Food Guide* (1991–2012) and *John & Sally McKenna's Irish Food Guides*; John and Sally McKenna began their authoritative Irish food guides in 1989 at a time when Irish restaurant culture was diversifying and artisan food-production culture was establishing itself in restaurant and farmers' market contexts. The late 20th century is often labelled as a 'Renaissance' period for Irish food as restaurants and alternative markets and their customers aligned to an AFN philosophy. Tracking wild food developments in their guidebooks over the last 35 years illustrates the growing profile of wild plants' food, including wild garlic, in Irish restaurant culture.

22 *The Irish Independent* (23 June 1984), 8 and *The Irish Independent* (3 July 1984), 7.

23 See, for instance, discussion by Peter Scholliers – 'Novelty and Tradition: The New Landscape for Gastronomy', in Paul Freedman ed.: *Food: A History of Taste* (California and London: University of California Press/Thames and Hudson, 2007), 332–357.

‘meaning’ and ‘meaning-making’. The emergence of social movements with a food focus, notably Slow Food in 1986, scaffolded the ethos of newly-forming AFNs. These emerging food philosophies intermeshed social, environmental and food justice, but they also sanctioned visitations to the past by ‘advocating historical food culture and by defending old-fashioned food traditions’.²⁴ Prioritised in these new food collectives were the elements of local, seasonal, and small-scale production, based on a tangible connection with place, people and tradition. In this paradigm, a selective, and, at times, an indiscriminate, use of the past popularised the history of food. By 2004, with the emergence of New Nordic Food (NNF) and the creation of what Larsen and Österlund-Pötzsch term a *superterrior* narrative²⁵ of purity and remoteness, wild food became an essential representative element of a food system untouched by human intervention, and by extension, its purity served narratives that created romanticised, if not mythologised, food identities.

This development saw the emergence of a new era of wild food and foraging and its associated integration into the culture of artisanal production and markets and *terroir*-based restaurants, and into communities of informed food-conscious consumers. In Ireland, a raft of NNF-effect developments recast wild food as beyond *de rigueur*; as resources of the wild, they were now tasked with responsibility for communicating multiple ‘meanings’. Embodied in wild food was the idea, if not the ideology, of authenticity, which was often viewed as a convergence of land, place, history and tradition, in line with the objectives of the NNF manifesto.²⁶ A burgeoning of the profiling and presence of wild garlic in multiple constructions unified food communities, and as the plant became a multi-functional icon of the movement, it assumed economic and identity roles. Wild garlic recipes appeared in cookbooks, especially in those of well-known chefs with a defined food philosophy, and it became a high-profile object in leisure wild-eccentric food events,²⁷ and it was integrated as an ingredient into small-scale artisan and speciality food production.²⁸

24 Slow Food Manifesto: An International Movement for the Defense of and the Right to Pleasure <https://www.slowfood.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/slow-food-manifesto.pdf>, accessed 10 August 2024.

25 Larsen, Hanne Pico and Österlund-Pötzsch, Susanne: ‘Foraging for Nordic Wild Food. Introducing Nordic Island *Terroir*’, in Lysaght, Patricia ed.: *The Return of Traditional Food* (Lund: Lund Studies in Arts and Cultural Sciences. Lund University, 2013) 68–78.

26 ‘The New Nordic Food Manifesto’, Nordic Co-operation: Nordic Council of Ministers <https://www.norden.org/en/information/new-nordic-food-manifesto>, accessed 10 August 2024.

27 See in this context, *The Irish Times* (14 April 2018), 26.

28 See, for instance, wild garlic pesto producers, Wild about Gibney’s Garden Preserves, Kildare, The Real Olive Company, Cork.

Heavily burdened, the plant was subject to a revision of its antiquity, and its role as a food resource was now extended from the Celtic to the post-Ice Age periods in popular appraisals, as evidence of the plant's enduring significance in Irish food culture.²⁹ This reconceptualising extended to academic work that proffered the study of placename evidence as a means of 'gaining a deeper insight into Irish culinary (and therefore cultural) heritage.'³⁰ Under the premise that the language of the landscape and its inclusion of food-related terms was a reliable indicator of past 'gastro' practice, placenames with *creamh* (wild garlic) were taken at face-value as culinary memory without accompanying interrogation of the complexities of place-naming conventions or consideration of the possible multiple reasons connecting the plant to landscape location.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Wild garlic has undergone a process of heritagisation based in part on evocations of the past that are considered useful and relevant to a variety of present-day food contexts. In popular and typical histories of the plant, wild garlic is cast in the pre-modern worlds of medieval and prehistoric Ireland. Here it functions as a food resource of the 'Celts' while its native-plant status is evoked in order to speculate about it being a food of the Island's earliest inhabitants. In such conjecturing, the relationship between plant and people in these pre-modern worlds, is uncomplicated by the impacts of market, and commercial and colonising forces. In this heritage-making for the plant, wild garlic serves as a return ticket to the past – the destination is a place where people, plant and nature have a close bond, and on return to the present, a recall of these elements holds value and potential in considerations of new, better or alternative ways with food.

In developing a pedigree for the plant, a selective approach to considering its history that often conflates the plant's native status with its language and landscape connections, has produced a fuzzy romanticised construction of its past. Such an approach echoes Lowenthal's summation of the emergence of heritage from the subsumption of different pasts to render a homogenised and 'general aura of

²⁹ See, for instance, *The Irish Times* (8 June 2019), 26.

³⁰ Mac Con Iomaire, Máirtín, 'Gastro-Topography: Exploring Food-Related Placenames in Ireland', *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 381/2 (2014), 151. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/43410726>> accessed 9 October 2024.

pastness.³¹ In Ireland, creating pastness for wild garlic brings with it curious similarities to the cultural movements of the late 19th century that sought a re-conquest of Irish culture with selective evocations of Ireland's Celtic past and Gaelic identity, which underpinned a creative intermeshing of landscape, language and 'peasant', to bring forward an essential Irishness that conceals historical details. This 're-discovery' of an Irish food identity located in the perceived purity of an Irish Golden Age, neglects the important realities that explain the plant's role as a seasonally-anticipated and substitution food in a subsistence economy. Furthermore, this process of heritagisation fails to address changes in the status of the plant through time, that explain the decline in its culinary uses in contrast to the survival of its medicinal applications, into the twentieth century. This present-day treatment of the plant produces a very particular type of entangled Celtic/Gaelic 'Irishness' food identity, not unlike the cultural and cultural-political movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This style of reclaiming the past promotes a sense of Ireland's exceptionalism as inferred in a review of the first Wild and Free Slow Food festival in county Wicklow in 2011, which was appraised as 'unique as a worldwide festival; indeed, it is probably only in Ireland that such an event can take place given our abundance of wild green leaves, flowers, berries, nuts, wild mushrooms, wild game and fish.'³²

This seemingly arbitrary and discriminatory approach in assigning value to some important historical details while neglecting or forgetting others, brings to mind Ronström's discussion of the concept of mindscape:

some things are actively selected, foregrounded, others are neglected and overlooked as they establish a certain perspective or gaze that makes us see a few things and to overlook a whole lot more. Mindscapes are institutionalised in 'domains', large networks of interlinked practices, ideas, artifacts, institutions etc.³³

In the case of wild garlic, the convergence of several elements, including the selective and speculative reading of the historical sources and the accompanying formation of a romantic food-past, together with an endless circulation of borrowings almost *ad*

31 Lowenthal, David: *Possessed by the Past: The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (New York: Free Press, 1996), 138.

32 White-Lennon, Biddy: 2012. 'Slow and Wild Fest 2012', 3 October 2012. <<https://www.irishfoodwritersguild.ie/wild-and-slow-fest-2012/>> accessed 17 September 2024.

33 Ronström, Owe: 'Memories, Tradition, Heritage', in Ronström, Owe and Palmenfelt, Ulf eds.: *Memories and Visions* (Tartu: Tartu University Press, 2005), 91.

verbum from the work of Lucas and Kelly,³⁴ mixed up with an inheritance of external wild food trends from the 1970s, has produced a particular mindscape for the plant that has multiple useful applications. Such truncated pasts can advance the agendas of food and tourism industries, that are sensitive to changing fashions and trends and to a wave of consumer reaction in mediating food-systems change. In this context, wild garlic is an ideal candidate to be elevated as an emblem of a 'good' and 'better' way with food. Here the creation of value for wild garlic resonates with the more intimate and intrinsic concerns of consumers as they grapple with engaging in a meaningful or alternative way with food. At a micro level, wild garlic allows conscientious and informed food consumers and communities to connect with the grander philosophies of food movements and AFNs where the loci of engagement can vary from restaurant to festival, to farmers' market, to woodland. These different spaces allow for the expression of a diversity of often emotionally-charged psychosocial performances – human to human connection, human to wilderness connection, human to past connection, and human to alternative food-system connection – in the conceptualised and trustworthy environments of nature and heritage.³⁵ Head chef and proprietor, Denis Cotter, outlines the multifaceted role wild garlic plays in the space of his acclaimed vegetarian restaurant:³⁶

Of the staff who collect/forage:

the guy who collects it, feels really good about it. He knows where to get it, he collects it, he brings it in. He feels like he's more than part of the machine than just being the chef who shows up and chops up stuff [...] makes them feel like they're involved in something more authentic [...] it gives a better sense of purpose to the people involved.

The consumer:

they feel that they're having an authentic experience and they're not throwing their money carelessly at some fraud [...] And then in some ways I feel sorry for consumers who are trying to buy in good conscience because it is such a minefield, and they know that it is. And I'd say they know that they're just taking a wild swing at it half the time, and this will do. This is reasonably authentic, ultimately, it's hard to tell who really is authentic and to what degree they are authentic.

34 For a fuller treatment, see Sexton, R.: 'Wild Garlic in Irish Foodways: History, Memory and Tradition', *Béascna 13: Iris Bhéaloideasa agus Eitneolaíochta/Journal of Folklore and Ethnology* (Cork: University College Cork 2025), 1–32.

35 For instance, *The Irish Times* (28 June 2005), 4; *The Irish Times* (4 May 2018), 17, and *The Irish Times* (1 April 2021), 46.

36 Personal Communication, 9 May 2024.

As a seasonal flag:

for a restaurant, it's a great signifier of spring. That's the big thing, so being able to put up big flags is important – squash says autumn, turnips say winter, asparagus and wild garlic say spring.

The story:

It's absolutely the story because you could make that flavour very easily without doing any foraging; it's urban chefs going out picking wild garlic to tell a story, to make themselves feel authentic and to then sell that story, the meaning that you're trying to convey, you just put wild garlic on the menu... wild garlic fills the narrative need.

The practical, symbolic and semiotic power of engaging with wild garlic is a contained and achievable way of dealing with the complex strata of postmodern food culture. To overcome these complexities, or at least to make them manageable, Cotter believes that for many in the food industry, producers and consumers, 'just one story will do'.³⁷ This light-touch connection with the intricacies of modern food systems transfers a heavy burden and responsibility to wild garlic. Ronström's summation of the macro and multiple functions of heritage can be applied to the micro case of the heritagisation of wild garlic and the creation of its multi-layered story. As a commonplace plant of the wild, it has a big job to do (Fig. 3). Yet, the fragmented heritage reconstructions of wild garlic, rather than being a holistic and diachronic analysis, undermine the potential of the historical record to serve as a tool for understanding social and environmental problems and the complexities of social, behavioural, and cultural change around food, in the face of modernity. In the partial construction of wild garlic's past in the present, nothing is heard of its earlier decline. The fate of the plant over time is not explored as an example of society engaging pragmatically with modernity, a development which ruptured and dislocated many Irish food traditions. The resultant complicated pathways of inheritance resulted in an ongoing and dual process of tradition-shedding and tradition-reformation. In this process, wild garlic has the potential to tell this enigmatic story based on a fuller treatment of history and an analysis of the dynamic nature of tradition, thereby serving as a site of learning in seeking to understand the nature and causes of food changes through time. However, the dominance of its heritage-status narrative and its circulation inside certain socio-demographics, suppresses a more considered and inclusive evaluation of the many socio-cultural perspectives that assigned it a disparate value and a variable relevance through time.

³⁷ Personal communication, 9 May 2024.

Tabl. 2. Wild garlic: what does heritage

Ronström	Wild Garlic/Ireland	Types and Uses of Pastness	Concepts/Themes	Touching on Reflexive Modernity
Heritage creates/reinforces identities	Wild, unspoilt, green, marginal, pure land/terroir	Early Irish Literature, Folklore	Resonance with 'Celtic' past, Renaissance, retrieval and revivals Distorting the past and elements of presentism	Using history and tradition to imagine an alternative or aspirational 'better' environmental realities for present and future Touching environmental governance
Heritage creates stability in a world marked by increasing tempo of life, faster changes, fragmentation and decreasing continuity in people's lives/worlds	In touch with nature, sense of safety and well-being Emotional/affective/spiritual: communities of practice & shared worldviews	Recalling everyday life in the past with shared connections to ancestral people, land, place	Alterity Authenticity Trust Ancestral knowledge Elements of the spiritual	Reaction to rapid social change/transformation of food system Simplicity in the face of complexity and confusion of choice Meaningful cognitive and philosophical connections with past and nature Environmental and food movements
Heritage is aesthetical compensation for structural, cultural, and/or economical marginality or deprivation	Connection to beauty of wild garlic's habitat underpinned by highlighting of its native plant status Aesthetic affect and sensory impact in cooking, vibrant colour, and decorative qualities of flowers	Place and space of pre-modern food systems Recognition of the beauty of nature and natural foods v 'modern' foods	Affective Spiritual capital Seasonality	New religion The outsider made insider Environmental movement
Heritage is a result of a general growth of interest in history in times of economic recession	Material connection-economic spillover/bolster to food and tourism industries Creates identity with various economic applications	All subsumed pasts (Lowenthal)	Knowledge-making & makers Makers of heritage & resultant economic capital	Prompts discussion/alignment to environmental modernisation
Heritage is an answer to (post/late) modern processes that promote play and experience, a general development 'from informative to performative.	Foraging and wild-centric events Home cooking and wild garlic dishes Participation in restaurant culture Communication/performance via social media	Tied to 'Celtic' festivals Wild garlic and St. Bridgid's Day Champ Wild garlic and butter- May Day	Performative Real, staged or imagined Time traveling Cultural-food capital	The storied self

It is the messy denser story of wild garlic, rather than the mythologised and heritage one that holds potential for the effecting of transformative engagement with the pressing social, cultural and environmental considerations of present and future food systems.

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NAOTO MINAMI

PROTECTING AND PROMOTING TRADITIONAL FOOD CULTURE IN CONTEMPORARY JAPAN

REGISTRATION OF FOOD CULTURE AS A CULTURAL PROPERTY WITH THE AGENCY FOR CULTURAL AFFAIRS

ABSTRACT

This paper explains the general trend of the reevaluation of traditional eating habits in Japan in recent years and the development of the cultural policy of the Agency for Cultural Affairs, the government agency which officially recognises the cultural value of traditional food culture and examines the examples submitted for the registration process as intangible cultural property.

HISTORICAL CHANGES IN FOOD CULTURE IN MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY JAPAN

To examine efforts made to protect and promote food culture in Japan, one must understand the historical transition of food habits in the country since modern times.¹ Japan's acceptance of Western civilisation in the modernisation processes after the Meiji period (1868–1912) led to the Westernisation of Japanese food culture, and existing traditional foodways had already undergone gradual transformation during the earlier Edo period (1603–1868). Furthermore, the time after World War II, especially following high economic growth in the 1960s, saw improvement in the Japanese standard of living, and a resulting rapid expansion in

1 Reference to this study: Naoto Minami: Protecting and Promoting Traditional Food Culture in Contemporary Japan: Registration of Food Culture as a Cultural Property with the Agency for Cultural Affairs. In Anikó Bádi and Patricia Lysaght (eds.): *Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage*. Budapest: ELTE RCH Institute of Ethnology – Museum of Ethnography, 2025. pp. 207–216.

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the trend towards new eating habits, such as mass consumption, the spread of instant foods, and the diversification of foodways.²

One indicator symbolising this trend was the substantial decline in rice consumption. Rice had been a staple of the Japanese diet since ancient times, but the annual per capita consumption of this foodstuff peaked at about 120 kg around 1960 and it has undergone a sustained decline since then to about 60 kg per person nowadays.³ Meat consumption, in contrast, increased during this period.

The avoidance of meat, because of the influence of Buddhism, was a widespread aspect of Japanese food culture, and fish and beans were eaten instead as sources of protein. After the Meiji period, although the taboo on eating meat had disappeared, meat dishes were still not widely consumed, especially in the home situation. After the period of high economic growth in the 1960s, however, meat consumption increased amid the major trend towards Westernised dietary habits, which saw the rapid popularity of meat dishes, especially among the younger generation, not only when eating out but also in home cooking. A symbolic event was the opening of Japan's first McDonald's in Shibuya, Tokyo, in 1971. Now, many people seem to have completely forgotten that eating meat had once been taboo in Japan. In addition, people gradually consumed more dairy products such as milk and butter, which had been but rarely consumed before the modern era.⁴

REEVALUATION OF THE JAPANESE-STYLE DIET

Changes in the Japanese food situation occurring over about half a century, including the decline of traditional eating habits and the Westernisation of foodways, led to various problems, such as the decline in food self-sufficiency or an increase in lifestyle-related diseases. By way of response, a trend towards the reevaluation of Japanese traditional eating habits began around the 1980s.

2 Ishikawa, Hiroko and Ehara, Ayako eds.: *Modern and Contemporary Food Culture* (in Japanese) (IK Corporation: Kawasaki, 2002); Ishige, Naomichi: *History of Food Culture in Japan: From the Paleolithic to the Present* (in Japanese) (Iwanami Publ.: Tokyo, 2015), 174–208; Harada, Nobuo: *History of Japanese Food* (in Japanese) (Shibunkaku Publ.: Kyoto, 2016), 75–91ff.

3 Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries: 'Trends in Rice Consumption' (in Japanese). <<https://www.maff.go.jp/j/seisan/kikaku/pdf/data01.pdf>> accessed 7 September 2024.

4 Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries: 'Food Supply and Demand Table' 2022 edition (in Japanese). <<https://www.maff.go.jp/j/zyukyu/fbs/>> accessed 7 September 2024.

Outside of Japan, in other developed countries, the harmful effects of overeating, especially health risks, were very much in focus. The first warning of this came in the McGovern Report, published in 1977. It pointed out the adverse health effects (such as obesity and lifestyle-related diseases) arising from the excessive intake of, for example, fats, sugars, and cholesterol, and proposed the avoidance of meat, animal fats, and sugar, among others food substances, while recommending an increased intake of legumes, grains, vegetables, and so on. This had a major impact on the promotion of the 'Japanese-style diet' that was subsequently developed in the country.⁵

Meanwhile, some new situations involving food in Japan itself had emerged since the 1980s. In regard to agriculture, several problems were caused by major changes in dietary habits, as outlined above. As the spread of Westernised diets increased in Japan, the consumption of bread, flour, meat, and dairy products surged, as did imports of food and feed crops in general, causing a significant decline in food self-sufficiency. Because Japan enjoyed economic prosperity, supported by export industries, during this period, it was hardly aware of the problem of food costs. However, as domestic agriculture production gradually shrank, a sense of crisis grew among agricultural policymakers. Serious problems – such as the rapid decline and ageing of the agricultural population, the expansion of instances of abandoned farmland due to acreage-reduction policies in response to the rice surplus, and food security concerns caused by the decline in food self-sufficiency – gradually came to the fore. Against this background, the movement to revive agriculture by reviewing traditional dietary habits expanded greatly.⁶

In addition, with a focus on medical care and health, nutritionists assessed Japan's traditional eating habits. Originally, Japanese people did not have a very high average life expectancy (65 years for men and 70 years for women in 1960) because of the low level of medical care and the general nutritional intake in the country; since then, however, the average life expectancy has increased, and Japan now has the longest-living population in the world (81 years for men and 87 years for women in

5 Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries: 'The Washoku Way; Japan's Nuanced Approach to Food', (in English). <<https://www.aff.go.jp/j/shokusan/gaisyoku/pamphlet/>> accessed 7 September 2024; Toyokawa, Hiroyuki, *Comparative Study of "Dietary Guidelines"* (in Japanese) (Toda, Japan: Nobunkyo, 1987), 88–99.

6 Nakashima, Yasuhiro: 'The Current State of Food from an Economic Perspective', in Naoto Minami ed.: *Perspectives of Food: Toward Sustainability* (in Japanese) (Nobunkyo, Toda: 2023), 315–323.

2022).⁷ The reasons for this change in life-expectancy include advances in medical care and the development of the health insurance system, but dietary habits have also had a significant impact in this regard. The co-existence, in a well-balanced manner, of a Western-style diet focused on meat and animal products, on the one hand, and a traditional dietary style consisting of high amounts of plant foods and a low intake of fat, on the other, had the result that healthy eating habits were generally realised in Japan around the 1970s.⁸

However, since the 1980s, as the preference for Western-style eating habits has steadily increased, especially among the younger generation, harmful effects, such as lifestyle-related diseases, have gradually increased. In response, higher emphasis has been placed on the benefits of the traditional Japanese diet, in recent years.

Another factor to consider in this context is the general tendency, since the 1980s, to highlight the value of the 'traditional' in the field of education and in the press. An examination of the overall directional change in postwar politics in Japan points to an intensified trend towards conservatism since the 1980s, and spontaneous nationalism has expanded at the general public level. In the context of these overall social trends, school education, for example, has emphasised the 'tradition' and 'love of the hometown'. In addition, the importance of food culture has become widely acknowledged in society in general since the turn of the century, and in this trend, the recognition of the value of 'traditional food' and 'local food' deepened, and, thus, traditional food culture became more highly valued.⁹

Against this social, economic, and political background, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW), and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) have been actively promoting traditional food culture. The MAFF addresses the interests of primary industries such as agriculture, the MHLW pursues medical and health objectives, and the MEXT represents educational policy agendas.

7 'The abridged life table of the year 2002' by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (in Japanese). <<https://www.mhlw.go.jp/toukei/saikin/hw/life/life22/dl/life22-15.pdf>> accessed 7 September 2024.

8 'Changes in Nutrition and Health of the Japanese People': Nutrition Guidance Office, Health Division, Health Bureau, The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (in Japanese; published in February 2022). <<https://www.mhlw.go.jp/content/000894080>> accessed 1 September 2024.

9 Nakamura, Mari: 'Lost "Food Education": From Consumers to the Public', Motoki Akitsu et al. eds.: *New Ethics of Agriculture and Food* (in Japanese) (Showado: Kyoto, 2018), 171–198; Kawakami, Mutsuko: *Why Food Thoughts Now, Social Critics* (Shakaihyoronsha: Tokyo, 2015), Chapter 1: 'Thinking about Japan's Food Culture', (in Japanese), 15–53.

Another governmental agency, the Agency for Cultural Affairs (ACA), which has jurisdiction over cultural administration, also began moving towards the protection of traditional food culture, albeit a little belatedly.

REGISTRATION OF TRADITIONAL FOOD CULTURE AS INTANGIBLE CULTURAL PROPERTY

The ACA's policies in this context are characterised by their emphasis on the value of food culture, and its protection, by registering it as a cultural property. However, challenges emerged before food culture gained official recognition as a cultural asset.

Cultural properties had been limited to buildings, crafts, sculptures, and other 'tangible cultural properties', while theatre, music, the traditional performing arts, and the like, had been labelled as 'intangible cultural properties'. To protect these cultural properties, the 'Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties' was enacted in 1950, and assets designated as cultural properties were subject to protection. In this context, little emphasis was placed on subjects linked to the culture of everyday life, and only a few were incorporated into tangible cultural properties as 'folklore materials'.

The 'Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties' was revised in 1954, but in its second revision, which took place in 1975, the existing term 'folk materials' was changed to 'folk cultural properties' and a new designation system for 'important intangible folk cultural properties' was established. In this way, by means of the institutionalisation of folk cultural properties linked closely to everyday life, the recognition of the value of lifestyle culture, as a cultural property, deepened. Nevertheless, it took a long time for food culture to be recognised as a cultural asset.¹⁰

In 2013, the registration of 'washoku' ('food of Japan') as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Property, presented an opportunity for making food culture widely recognised as a cultural property. In 2017, the 'Basic Law for Promotion of Culture and Arts' was amended, and the phrase 'food culture' was added to existing examples

¹⁰ Agency for Cultural Affairs, 'Fifty Years History of the Cultural Property Protection Law' (in Japanese). <https://www.bunka.go.jp/tokei_hakusho_shuppan/hakusho_nenjihokokusho/archive/pdf/93711601_01.pdf> accessed 7 September 2024.

of the culture of everyday life. This was the first step, and in 2021, part of the ‘Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties’ was amended, creating a new policy to protect food culture as a cultural property. Specifically, a ‘registration system’ of cultural properties was established ‘to actively protect a variety of intangible cultural properties, including lifestyle cultures such as calligraphy and food culture’. With the introduction of this registration system, which is less strict than the conventional designation system for cultural properties, the institutional protection of traditional food culture was officially established as a system.¹¹

The legal difference between ‘designation’ and ‘registration’ is that the former is subject to strict conditions in exchange for greater protection, while the latter involves easier conditions in exchange for less protection. In any case, these complex changes in the legal system established the legal basis for food culture to be recognised as a cultural asset. Thus, food culture was finally recognised as an intangible cultural heritage.

EXAMPLES OF THE REGISTRATION OF FOOD CULTURES AS AN INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN JAPAN

The process of the registration of intangible cultural properties associated with lifestyle culture involves establishing that the cultural assets are ‘items with high artistic value or historical significance related to living culture’; that is, that the items in question have recognised ‘artistic value’ or ‘historical value’ in everyday culture.¹² Registration is thus possible if either criterion is satisfied, but conventionally, formal recognition of both criteria is desirable. Therefore, registering a certain food culture as an intangible cultural property is not easy.

In circumstances where these criteria are met, the work of registering food culture as a cultural property, has begun. The person at the centre of the actual registration process is Mr. O, an investigator with the ACA. In addition, the ‘Expert Investigation Committee (Food Culture Committee)’ was founded as an organisation of experts

11 Agency for Cultural Affairs, ‘Laws to Partially Amend the Act on the Protection of Cultural Properties’ (Reiwa 3) (in Japanese). <<https://www.bunka.go.jp/seisaku/bunkazai/93084801.html>> accessed 7 September 2024.

12 ‘Criteria for Registration of Registered Intangible Cultural Properties and Accreditation of Holders and Holding Organisations’ (in Japanese) (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Notification No. 90 of Reiwa 3). <https://www.bunka.go.jp/seisaku/bunkazai/pdf/93352501_01.pdf> accessed 7 September 2024.

who deliberate on the pros and cons of registering specific cases related to food culture as cultural properties. The committee has seven members including the author, who was elected as a chairperson during the actual deliberations.

In 2021, the ‘Traditional Knowledge and Skills of *sake*-making’ was the first item of Japanese food culture to be registered as an intangible cultural property.¹³ The reasons for its registration were summarised as follows:

Traditional *sake*, an important part of the Japanese food culture, has been rooted in Japan since ancient times, and its production was based on the manual techniques experientially acquired by *sake* brewers even before modern science. Despite the mechanisation and expansion of mass production since the modern era, traditional manual techniques have been passed down to the present day and are often used in *sake* brewing even now.¹⁴

It is evident from the foregoing summary that although an artistic aspect of *sake*-making is not mentioned, its historical significance is strongly emphasised.

In 2022, two subjects linked to food culture were registered as intangible cultural properties. One is ‘*namagashi* with a special confectionery name’ and the other is ‘Kyoto cuisine.’¹⁵ The registration for ‘*namagashi* with a special confectionery name’ was explained as follows:

There are various types of fresh Japanese sweets, which is one of the traditional confectioneries, and among them, *namagashi* – raw Japanese sweets made of *nerikiri* or *konashi*, both of which are a special bean paste – takes advantage of highly elaborate presentation to create a variety of traditional seasonal expressions. The design of *namagashi* is also reflected in the artistically-rich confectionery inscriptions taken from classical literature. *Namagashi* has its roots in the ‘high-class confectionery’ (confectionery made from expensive imported white sugar) produced in Kyoto during the ‘Genroku period’ (1688–1704), and it was during this period that the special confectionery name was established. As described above, ‘*namagashi* with special confectionery inscriptions’ has historical significance related to food culture and is also of high artistic value.

13 Press release by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, dated 15 October 2021 (in Japanese). <https://www.bunka.go.jp/koho_hodo_oshirase/hodohappyo/pdf/93480101_01.pdf> accessed 7 September 2024. (For more information, see <https://www.bunka.go.jp/seisaku/shokubunka/pdf/93868901_03.pdf> accessed 7 September 2024.)

14 As for the detailed explanation, see an English brochure ‘Traditional knowledge and skills of sake-making’ <https://www.bunka.go.jp/seisaku/shokubunka/pdf/93868901_03.pdf> accessed 7 September 2024.

15 Press release dated 12 October 2022 by the Agency for Cultural Affairs (in Japanese). <https://www.bunka.go.jp/koho_hodo_oshirase/hodohappyo/pdf/93776401_01.pdf> accessed 7 September 2024.

'Kyoto cuisine' is registered as a cultural property for the following reasons:

Kyoto, as a political and cultural centre from the 'Heian period' (from the late 8th century to the late 12th century), has greatly contributed to the development of Japanese food culture. In this city, the practice of Kyoto cuisine was formed, which expresses 'Kyoto-ness' – characteristics of Kyoto – through food which integrates cooking, facilities, and hospitality. It reflects Kyoto's traditional events, customs, and climate, and preserves the value of moderation and elegance in line with Kyoto's traditional aesthetics. The sense of the seasons and traditional events is reflected in the selection of ingredients and menus, and such aesthetic sense is expressed by means of the tableware and the room where dishes are served, as well as in the service and behaviour of the host who entertains guests. As mentioned above, Kyoto cuisine has historical significance related to food culture and is also of high artistic value.

These descriptions show that both *namagashi* and 'Kyoto cuisine' satisfy the criteria of both artistic and historical value and could thus be registered as intangible cultural properties.

In October 2024, two years after the abovementioned three registrations, a fourth item linked to Japanese food culture achieved registration as an intangible cultural property – the 'hand-knead tea-production technique'.¹⁶ In this case, the historical value is emphasised significantly, although an artistic aspect is not mentioned.

TENTATIVE CONCLUSION

Considering the history of Japanese food culture, which significantly developed during the Edo period, and thereafter transformed and matured during the modernisation era, many candidates can be recognised as cultural properties. The only problem is that although it is relatively easy to assess the historical value of these food cultures, it is somewhat challenging to prove their artistic value because, unlike painting, music, and the performing arts, cuisine and food culture have for long been regarded as being unrelated to art. Recent years, however, have seen the creation of new forms of artistic cuisine, such as Nordic cuisine, and a food culture that is fully valuable in terms of art is expected to be discovered in the future. Therefore, food culture researchers will be required to consciously explore food's artistic value.

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PART III:

THE MANIFOLD MEANINGS
OF FOOD AND HERITAGE



PÁL GÉZA BALOGH

‘WHY ARE WE STUCK AT THE LEVEL OF GOMOLYA IN CHEESE-MAKING?’

THE CARPATHIAN BASIN DAIRY HERITAGE AND MODERN ARTISANAL CHEESE-MAKERS

ABSTRACT

In my study I review the main lines of the history of cheese-making in Hungary: the cheese-making of shepherds and peasants, the manorial cheese culture and the development of modern factory cheese production. I then describe how modern cheese-makers relate to this complex heritage: the process of modern tradition-creating, the usage of international recipes, and the interrelationship between heritage and economic considerations.

The production¹ of cheese is a long-established segment of agriculture and the food industry in many parts of Europe, especially among the ‘great cheese nations’² widely known for mature hard and soft cheeses. Related to this, the transformation of modern cheese-making in much of Europe has been a major subject of research, whether it be consideration of the transformation of economic practices,³ the functioning of various cooperative models with separate raw-material production

1 Reference to this study: Pál Géza Balogh: ‘Why are we stuck at the level of *gomolya* in cheese-making?’ The Carpathian Basin Dairy Heritage and Modern Artisanal Cheese-makers. In Anikó Báti and Patricia Lysaght (eds.): *Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage*. Budapest: ELTE RCH Institute of Ethnology – Museum of Ethnography, 2025. pp. 219–227.

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2 A term used by some Hungarian cheesemakers usually to describe France, Switzerland, Germany and Italy.

3 Bonow, Madeleine and Rytkönen, Paulina: ‘Small-scale Farm Dairies in Jämtland. Ancient Practices in Modern Forms’, in Lysaght, Patricia ed.: *The Return of Traditional Food. Proceedings of the 19th International Ethnological Food Research Conference* (Lund: Lund University, 2013), 81–93.

and dairy-processing methods,⁴ or the role of complex relations to tradition and heritage practices, origin protection schemes, and geographical indication systems in modern alternative food networks.⁵ In contrast, Heather Paxson examines artisanal cheese-making in the US in terms of the question of how to build a relationship with the landscape in a region where the sector has but a limited history, a process which she calls *reverse-engineering terroir*.⁶ In this paper, I will show how the modern Hungarian cheese-making sector relates to the complex historical heritage of the Carpathian Basin's dairy processing systems, and also the ways in which this heritage can be used to develop commercially-sustainable practices in the modern economy.

The history of dairy production and processing has been the subject of in-depth ethnographic research in terms of the economy and food in Hungary, with special attention being paid to the practices of the peasantry and the shepherds in this regard. In her most recent summary of the historical development of the issue, Eszter Kisbán describes the Carpathian Basin as a meeting point of several milk processing systems, which are geared towards the production of different products. As regards cheese, in addition to the rennet cheese-making method, the yoghurt-making system and the rennet-free, curdled milk system, are also present in the region. The most common type of cheese in the rennet cheese-making system is cheese made from sheep's milk using rennet, and this cheese is known as *gomolya* or *gömölye*. Its name varies from region to region, and it is consumed both fresh and mature. Sheep's milk cheese is often further processed and finally consumed in the form of mature curd cheese, which is also known by different names e.g. *liptói túró* ('liptó curd'), *érett túró* ('mature curd'), and *készerű túró* ('bitter curd'). At the same time, the product without rennet, which has the consistency of curd, is also called *gomolya* or *gömölye* in some places. Sometimes a distinction is made between the fresh *gomolya* and *sajt* ('cheese'), which is squeezed in vats, but the two names are

4 De Roest, Kees and Menghi, Alberto: 'Reconsidering "Traditional" Food: The Case of Parmigiano Reggiano Cheese', *Sociologia Ruralis* 40/4 (2000), 439–451; De Roest, Kees and Menghi, Alberto: 'Localisation Strategies in the Swiss Dairy Industry', *Sociologia Ruralis* 56/2 (2014), 136–156.

5 Grasseni, Christina: *The Heritage Arena. Reinventing Cheese in the Italian Alps* (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2016); Boissard, Pierre: *Camembert. A National Myth* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003).

6 Paxson, Heather: *The Life of Cheese: Crafting Food and Value in America* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2013); Paxson, Heather: 'Locating Value in Artisan Cheese: Reverse Engineering Terroir for New World Landscapes', *American Anthropologist* 92/3 (2010), 444–457.

not clearly separated. The same methods of processing sheep's milk are also applied to cow's milk, to varying degrees, from region to region.⁷

The second layer, which has greatly influenced Hungarian cheese culture, is livestock breeding and dairy processing on manorial estates. Livestock and dairy culture on these estates greatly influenced the adoption of different animal breeds, the spread of dairy animals in general, the spread of professional, scientific knowledge of animal husbandry, and the development of agricultural science and higher agricultural education and training.⁸ Cheese-makers from Western European countries were often brought in to the manorial estates in Hungary in order to adapt local dairy practices to domestic conditions, thus laying the foundations for a professionalising of dairy culture with which the later food industry often shows historical continuity.⁹ In addition, the influence of churches and monastic orders was a decisive factor in Hungarian cheese culture.¹⁰

The third dominant layer was the activity of the emerging food industry, which grew out of the activities of the manorial estates and also relied on raw materials bought from the peasantry through the dairy cooperatives. The cheeses that became established in the food industry were also local adaptations of European cheeses, and these defined consumer culture and consumer demand for a long time. The cheeses in question included the product of the Magyaróvár Dairy Experimental Station, the *moson megyei csemege* ('Moson County delicacy') or *ilmici* cheese,¹¹ the Emmental cheese in Csénye-Újmajor, the Rokfort cheese on the estate of Prince Montenuovo in Némethbóly, and the local versions of the Romadur cheese on the Kisbér Stud Farm.¹² In the second half of the 20th century, Hungarian *Trappist cheese* started to dominate the food industry, following a government decision in

7 Kisbán, Eszter: 'Táplálkozáskultúra' ('Food Culture'), in Paládi-Kovács, Attila eds.: *Magyar néprajz nyolc kötetben IV. Életmód* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1997), 816–830.

8 On the issue of breeding, which is also linked to the development of animal breeding, milk production and milk processing, see Gaál, László: 'A szimentáli fajta egy évszázada Magyarországon, 1850–1950' ('A century of the Simmental breed in Hungary, 1850–1950'), *Agrártörténeti Szemle* 15/1–2 (1973), 550–570; Király István: 'A bonyhádi tájfajta szarvasmarha kialakulása' ('The development of the Bonyhád local variety of cattle'), *Agrártörténeti Szemle* 7/4 (1965), 550–570; Surányi, Béla: 'A lapály szarvasmarha tenyésztése Magyarországon az I. világháborúig' ('The breeding of Lapály cattle in Hungary until World War I'), *Agrártörténeti Szemle* 24/3–4 (1982), 388–427.

9 Balatonyi, Mihály and Szakály, Sándor: 'Tejipar' ('Dairy Industry'), in Síki, Jenő and Tóth-Zsiga, István eds.: *A magyar élelmiszeripar története* (Budapest: Mezőgazda Kiadó, 1997), 297–322.

10 Paládi-Kovács, Attila: 'A magyarországi állattartó kultúra korszakai' ('The Eras of Livestock Culture in Hungary') (Budapest: MTA Néprajzi Kutatóintézet, 1993), 140–141.

11 Balatonyi and Szakály: 'Tejipar', 303.

12 Balatonyi and Szakály: 'Tejipar', 305.

1941, made on purely economic grounds, to produce 'a single type of semi-hard cheese of Trappist character' from at least 60% of the total quantity of milk produced in Hungary. This decision has continued to play a crucial role in shaping consumer demand for Trappist cheese to the present time.¹³

In 1948, the Hungarian dairy industry, like other industries, was nationalised. The dairy cooperative system was eliminated, and many smaller factories were closed and replaced by state-owned dairy companies based on county borders. Cooperatives, and integrated backyard farming, and state farms, were then the main contributors to milk production.¹⁴ The success of Trappist cheese persisted throughout the socialist era, but new industrial dairy products like bulk cheese also started to appear.¹⁵

A common topic of modern Hungarian public discussions about cheese-making, often the subject of spirited debate, is its relationship to the historical cheese-culture of the Carpathian Basin, and its use and adaptation to current conditions. During fieldwork which I conducted in Hungary,¹⁶ I observed an intense process of tradition-creation, in relation to cheese-making, that has not yet been completed. Currently, a phase of path-finding is in progress: already established individual cheese-making practices have begun to interact with each other in the discursive space, while many are still in the process of shaping their own practices. Several, often conflicting narratives, are competing, each aiming to create a modern Hungarian cheese-culture based on the traditions of the Carpathian Basin. This is less motivated by consumer expectations than by the development of just personal curiosity and interest. While the producers are constantly searching for what meets their own individual needs, they are also continually looking at the question of marketability. Their primary concern, which is also intricately connected to the representation of the interests of the Hungarian cheese-making community, is how cheese-making in Hungary should be characterised and perceived – in other words, which typical products should represent Hungarian cheese culture, what standard quality-

13 Ungváry, Krisztián: *A Horthy-rendszer és antiszemitizmusának mérlege. Diszkrimináció és társadalompolitika Magyarországon 1919–1944* ('The balance of the Horthy regime and its anti-Semitism. Discrimination and Social Politics in Hungary 1919–1944') (Budapest: Jelenkor Kiadó, 2016), 397.

14 Balatonyi and Szakály: 'Tejipar', 312–319.

15 Balatonyi and Szakály: 'Tejipar', 312–319.

16 My fieldwork had three wider geographic locations: Budapest, the capital; the Balaton Uplands, a touristic region, and Baranya County, a peripheral region. I also conducted several interviews with important actors of the Hungarian Cheese sector in other parts of the country.

measures should be implemented, and what collective economic and developmental policies should be established based on this?

For modern contemporary Hungarian cheesemakers, a very wide range of global recipes is potentially available. Thanks to the spread of the internet, language barriers are no longer a hindrance, and the necessary inoculants for making basically any chosen international cheese, are relatively easy to acquire. In contrast, a continuous, multi-generational Hungarian cheese culture is mostly lacking. Furthermore, some cheese-makers are playing a very conscious role in the formation of the contemporary Hungarian cheese scene. One of them has also assumed a significant role in education, thereby having a substantial influence on modern contemporary Hungarian cheese-culture as a whole. This player has gathered knowledge about dairy processing specifically from shepherds and elderly peasants in Hungary and Transylvania, and he also wishes to directly link the present situation with the past of dairy processing in the Carpathian Basin. Another key participant has aimed at summarising the available historical data on cheese-making, and, in particular, on milk processing in Hungary, and to use the data in question in his work as a contemporary modern cheesemaker. A third important player has contemplated the notion of processing and presenting the traditions of Hungarian milk-processing in the form of a museum on the farm's premises, as an addition to its own economic practice.

There is no agreement on what is *traditional* or *local* in the recipe-set for cheese in Hungary. A significant number of cheesemakers do not address this issue at all, but rather shape their products based solely on their own creative needs and matching market demands, and according to their limited knowledge-base, technical skills, and practical knowledge. Those who are already actively participating in the process of creating tradition, by means of ideological debates and in the negotiation of narratives, are already reacting to this situation: 'I can count on two hands the number of people who ... think anything about it' (said a man in Hajdú-Bihar County, 2022). The debate is constrained by limited knowledge, and the lack of accessible, popular works on cheese history in the public domain – the readily available domestic literature is mostly focused on technical details. Almost no one who takes a position on the issue has a firm position, and there are many questions – often involving the researcher:

But what I don't understand is why this is the case – but perhaps the ethnographer can answer this – why is there such a huge difference? Why are

we stuck at the level of *gomolya* in cheese-making? Why did we not progress further? [...] To this day, it is a customer's tradition. So here in the village I cannot sell a mouldy cheese (a man in Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County, 2019).

As we have seen above, the processing of cow's milk in the cheese-culture of the Carpathian Basin was basically characterised by the production of simple, sour dairy products e.g. *aludttej* ('curdled milk'), *tejföl* ('sour cream'), and *túró* ('curd cheese'). The dominant, genuine cheese-culture was based on the processing of sheep's milk, and originally the name, *gomolya*, was used to cover these various fresh and mature cheeses. There is a common belief that there is no strong tradition of cheese in the domestic production- and consumption-culture of Hungary, especially not of the mature cheeses that many people view as standards, similar to those of Western Europe. This lack of tradition, as perceived by cheesemakers, also leaves the future uncertain for many:

But no, cheese making is not that traditional here. It's not like [my father did it, my grandfather did it], and it just doesn't progress. And we [...] so I don't know, for instance, what do we start with, or will the children do it? Will it continue? Will it be something that goes back forty years? Or will it just stop at some point and then that's it? Nobody knows (a woman in Pest County, 2022).

There is discussion and uncertainty among modern cheesemakers in Hungary about which aspects of cheese culture are to be considered *traditional* and *local*. As more information about the history of cheese is uncovered, the uncertainty increases, leading cheesemakers to realise that the categories of local and global, traditional and modern, cannot be strictly separated, and it is also becoming evident that complex processes of appropriation and adaptation are to be found in the history of cheese in Hungary. When the connection to networks over local areas becomes apparent even behind the most traditionally-regarded recipes, these concepts are also significantly transformed and refined in producer narratives. The complex historical processes of passing on and adopting become increasingly familiar to cheesemakers, causing them to question what types of cheese they should now make:

But there is so much passing on [...] from one to another. It's a good one to take over. He doesn't mind whether it's Swabian or not. He wants to earn a living. Right? I think so. And if he steals something good, he steals the idea, the concept, he doesn't give a fuck. There are transitions. In my opinion (a male in Hajdú-Bihar County, 2022).

So there are also people who find a way to market their products under the label of *tradition* who are experimenting with various European hard and semi-hard cheeses, but are guided more by their own creative needs, life history, and professional ambitions, than by 'tradition'. This is how a cheese-maker, who is actively involved in researching the history of cheese understands the worth of the historical process:

So, that specific cheese. Why there? Why did it turn out like that? Or why [...] why has it lasted for centuries, for millennia? So few people, see, so few people understand the importance of why it is like that. So I don't make a [...] I don't make a mountain cheese in the lowlands. I can do the technique [...] but clearly, the maturing, the... the feed is also in the milk, in the cheese. (a male in Hajdú-Bihar County, 2022).

Thus, the adaptation of the technique to the landscape environment becomes more important than the traditional nature of the product, and traditional recipes are appreciated for their connection with the landscape – in fact, for their traditional *ecological knowledge* that can be adapted to the present. On the one hand, this trend is justified by the concept of a perceived fusion of local and global elements, while on the other, another narrative, a particular view of history, arises. According to this narrative, local dairy systems in Hungary simply have not had the time to develop the complex, mature cheese-cultures that have evolved in the major cheese-producing countries elsewhere in Europe, and it is now time to move on from this path, after the socialist era, which was perceived in this context as a very negative, fragmented period.

Along with the intentional creation of tradition, a spontaneous tradition-building process has taken place, the origins of which are very difficult to untangle. On the domestic palette, it is evident that the most common type of cheese at the present time is the simple, curdled fresh cow's cheese, usually sold as *gomolya*. Sheep farming and sheep's milk cheese is only a very minor feature of modern cheese-making, due to the complexity of farming technology, the different kinds of ecological conditions, and the low milk yield, as well as varying tastes. Contemporary *gomolya* is an adaptation of the historical cheese culture of the past to modern conditions. However, because of its familiar name, modern '*gomolya*' still carries a sense of tradition and authenticity, which also serves as a marketing brand. Some cheese-makers are protesting against what they see as ignorance and others as deliberate falsification in relation to modern *gomolya*, but this no longer affects the widespread use of the name throughout the country. Many of them are explicitly aware that consumers are looking for fresh cheeses under the name *gomolya* and, although they

are aware of the different meaning of the historic word, they have adapted to the change in meaning in response to market expectations.

Another important aspect in relation to cheese-making is marketability, which, especially for those selling to the high-end gastronomy sector, shifts the sales range towards aged cheeses and hence towards the worldwide recipe collection. It is also common to see attempts to adapt products with protected designations of origin, such as *camembert* and *brie*, but these are often further developed according to the cheesemakers' own ideas and local conditions, often resulting in completely unique cheeses. These adaptations often mark the difference, the next stage of the adaptation-process (as in the dairy adaptations of the early 20th century) with fancy names, which are currently individual inventions – brands associated with the individual producer. So far, in one instance – that of *Balaton cheese* – there has been an attempt to create a recipe that encompasses the landscape and unites several producers, but this has only been established in the repertoire of one cheesemaker.

On the one hand, the issue is an ideological one, between tradition and localism and globalism, while on the other, it also has a significant market aspect: it is not enough for a product to be ideologically suitable; its marketability is also a major concern. However, the two are also interconnected: it is possible to develop a product that aligns with the cheese-makers' perspective and, which, at the same time, with the right marketing, that can be sold. The motivation for the process of creating tradition is only slightly based on the national image as a set of values, but the ecological drive and local preference – the preference for recipes better suited to the location and derived from the local ecological environment – are much stronger. The concept of *tradition* is strongly intertwined in the narratives with the notion of *localism*, which includes seeking products that fit into the natural environment and landscape. The *traditional* label is not a major marketing tool in the promotion of cheeses in Hungary today and it is very rarely used in product communication.

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MAJA GODINA GOLIIJA

BAKING THE CHRISTMAS BREAD, *POPRTNIK*, IN SVIBNO, SLOVENIA

A Living and an Ambiguous Food Heritage

ABSTRACT

The preparation of unique Christmas dishes is widespread among people and shows the importance of the Christmas holidays in their lives. Among these dishes we can mention a Slovenian Christmas bread made of a rich leavened dough, called *poprtnik*. The baking of *poprtnik* has been preserved for several centuries in the Slovenian hill village of Svibno. Its preparation is more than just a family tradition as it also has an essential social function in the village community. The Christmas bread, *poprtnik*, is becoming increasingly important in promoting Svibno and for the cultural identity of the inhabitants of this small settlement.

INTRODUCTION

The baking and ritual consumption of Christmas bread has been extensively studied and examined within European ethnology, and features in numerous scholarly works across the continent.¹ As a dish traditionally prepared in various European countries to mark the most significant holiday of the year, namely Christmas, and as a central element of associated festive celebrations, it is unsurprising that Christmas bread has attracted considerable academic interest. Examples of such studies include those of ethnologists Nils Keyland and Nils-Arvid Bringeus, for Sweden, and Rastislava Stolična for Slovakia.²

1 Reference to this study: Maja Godina Golija: Baking the Christmas Bread, *Poprtnik*, in Svibno, Slovenia: A Living and an Ambiguous Food Heritage. In Anikó Báti and Patricia Lysaght (eds.): *Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage*. Budapest: ELTE RCH Institute of Ethnology – Museum of Ethnography, 2025. pp. 229–241.
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2 Keyland, Nils: *Julbröd, julbockar och staffanssång dokument rörande den svenska allmogens julfirande* ('Christmas bread, Christmas goats and staff carol document concerning the Swedish common

In Slovenia, this topic has also been partially researched. Ethnologists who have focused on the rituals and the dietary traditions of the Slovenian people, such as Rajko Ložar, Milko Matičetov, and Niko Kuret, have investigated Christmas bread.³ However, previous scholarship has primarily centred on the preparation and production of Christmas bread in the Ljubljana and Notranjska regions. Less attention has been paid to the social significance of *poprtnik*, particularly regarding its role within family and neighbourhood communities and its function in fostering connections among local community members.

THE TRADITION OF BAKING THE CHRISTMAS BREAD, POPRTNIK, IN SVIBNO

In this essay, we examine the tradition of baking Christmas bread, known as *poprtnik*, in the Posavje region of Slovenia. The preparation of this festive bread is recognised as an element of the Register of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Slovenia/*Register nesnovne kulturne dediščine Slovenije*. Our field research was conducted in the village of Svibno, situated in the eastern-central part of Slovenia at an elevation of 539 metres. Svibno is a typical hilltop agricultural settlement in terms of its layout and structure. The village was established beneath the medieval castle of the noble Ostrovrhar family in the 12th century.⁴ The farms in this region are clustered, though dispersed over a relatively wide area.

The baking of *poprtnik* was already described in the 17th century, by the Slovenian polyhistor Janez Valvasor, in his book *Die Ehre des Hertzogthums Crain*. In this text, Valvasor wrote:

For Christmas [...] they knead a large loaf of bread and decorate it with various ornaments. However, for the nobility and citizens, who have more delicate tastes, they add considerable amounts of fat and eggs to the dough. The bread is further adorned with decorative dough elements. This bread is called poprtnig⁵ (Translation by Maja Godina Golija).

people's Christmas celebrations') (Stockholm: Nordiska museet, 1919); Bringéus, Nils-Arvid: 'Christmas Stacks', in Lysaght, Patricia ed.: *Food and Celebration: From Fasting to Feasting. Proceedings of the 13th Conference of the International Commission for Ethnological Food Research, Ljubljana, Preddvor, and Piran, Slovenia, June 5–11, 2000* (Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, 2002), 325–331; Stoličnā, Rastislava: *Jedlá a nápoje našich predkov* ('Food and drinks of our ancestors') (Bratislava: Veda, 1991).

3 Ložar, Rajko: *Narodopisje Slovencev 1* ('Ethnography of the Slovenians 1') (Ljubljana: Založba Klas, 1944); Matičetov, Milko: 'Poprtnik' ('Poprtnik' bread), *Slovenski etnograf* 6–7 (1953), 223–239; Kuret, Niko: *Praznično leto Slovencev 2* ('The Festive Year of the Slovenians 2') (Ljubljana: Družina, 1989).

4 *Krajevna skupnost Svibno* ('Local community'). <<https://www.radece.si/krajevna-skupnost-svibno/>> accessed 3 September 2024.

5 Valvasor, Johann Weikhard – Vajkard, Janez: *Die Ehre Dess Hertzogthums Crain* ('The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola'), VII/XVI (Nürnberg, 1689), 472.



Fig 1. View of the village of Svibno, 2019. (Photo by Maja Godina Golija)

Written sources attest to the preparation of *poprtnik*, this traditional Christmas bread, over several centuries.⁶ This suggests that knowledge surrounding its preparation was meticulously safeguarded and passed down through generations. In the same way, an understanding of its symbolic and social significance, particularly its ritual and communal roles during the Christmas period, has been transmitted within families. This pattern mirrors the transmission process of other festive culinary traditions in Slovenia, such as the baking of *potica* (a festive cake) or the preparation of the Easter dishes *žegen*, which, like the making of *poprtnik*, have traditionally been the domain of women. Such practices reflect a clear gendered division of labour within the farming family, particularly in relation to festive diets.

This observation is well articulated by the sociologist Stephen Mennell in his research on ritual foods.⁷ According to Mennell, food associated with ritual and religious practices is particularly guarded and often entrusted to younger women within the community. Women, he argues, have played a central role in the preservation of traditions, folk beliefs, and the transmission of ritual knowledge. The teaching of these culinary practices, including the preparation of ritual dishes, typically passes from older to younger women, especially within the family structure. In this context, mothers often instructed their daughters, while mothers-in-law would pass on their culinary knowledge to their sons' wives or partners.

During my fieldwork and visits to the Svibno area in 2019 and 2020, I found that this tradition had persisted there. In partially-directed narrative interviews, it was explained to me that the makers of the Christmas bread, *poprtnik*, today, had learned this skill from the older women in the family, including those women who came to Svibno from urban centres, such as Trbovlje and Radeče, when they married into hill farms. In the past, *poprtnik*, was baked, pre-Christmas, in Slovenia, during the second half of December, while today, the baking period has expanded into early January, to just before the Three Kings Day/Epiphany. This festive and ritual bread was placed on the table to mark the most significant winter holidays: Christmas, New Year, and Epiphany. *Poprtnik* bread was on the table from Christmas until 6 January and it was, and is, supposed to lead to a good harvest, and to health and happiness on the farm during the coming year. In Svibno and in the surroundings of Radeče, the tradition of preparing the Christmas bread, *poprtnik*, is still very much

6 Popit, Ilja: 'Daritvena pogača župnik in Valvasorjev Hausgötze – gospodarček' ('The Offering Bread župnik and Valvasor's Hausgötze – gospodarček'), *Studia mythologica Slavica* 22 (2019), 207–220.

7 Mennell, Stephen and Murcott, Anne in H. van Otterloo, Anneke ed.: *Prehrana i kultura. Sociologija hrane*. ('The Sociology of Food: Eating, Diet, and Culture') (Zagreb: Jesenski i Turk, 1998), 41.

alive in family circles today, especially as part of the celebration of the Three Kings Day (6 January).

The bread is kneaded by housewives from a richer kind of dough on 5 January. This dough is made from white flour, milk, eggs, sugar, and butter, and it is baked like a cake; some actually bake it in a cake mould. In the past, the bread was far less decorated than it is today, and then it often had only a cross cut on top. Today, however, Christmas bread is richly decorated with dough ornaments, such as a cross, whales, birds, or flowers. According to my informants, the decoration of the bread depends primarily on the knowledge and skill of the women. Bread is baked in a wood-fired oven or in the oven of a stove. When baked, it is cooled and placed on the table and covered with a tablecloth – this is the source of the name or the etymology of the word '*poprtnik*', as it refers to something that is under the tablecloth.

The handling and use of bread in rituals and festive practices has changed profoundly over the past two decades. If it was typical in former times that festive bread was enjoyed and used for ritual acts mainly in the home and in the neighbourhood community, *poprtnik* bread from Svibno, and its veneration and exhibition, has been, since 2017, an essential part of public life in the village.⁸ *Poprtnik* bread is a source of neighbourly relations, friendships and family ties. Like some other holiday dishes, the Christmas bread, *poprtnik*, and Svibno, significantly influence the lives of families, especially women, and communities.⁹

As the homemakers from Svibno remind us, they ritually consumed *poprtnik* in the family for the Three Kings Day/Epiphany. According to informant M. D. from Svibno, it was said that a man, for health and strength, must eat nine different pieces of Christmas bread and drink seven buckets of wine on Three Kings Day. As this belief is still active, neighbours and relatives exchange pieces of Christmas bread, *poprtnik*, on Three Kings Day. These acts strongly connect the community of people in Svibno to each other, and, in addition to their ritual significance, they also have a vital social function. At a time when many do not have much time in their daily lives to socialise with neighbours, exchanging pieces of bread with them and with relatives, also means socialising and stimulating social ties in the village. Alternatively, as Buchli pointed out, it is the thing that binds the members of a community together

8 Ivanišević, Jelena: 'Čuvari marende: muški kulinarski kružoci u Starome gradu' ('The Keepers of Marenda [Mid-morning Snack]: Male Culinary Groups in Stari Grad, Croatia'), *Narodna umjetnost* 2 (2021), 185–203.

9 Godina Golija, Maja: 'Contemporary Appropriations of Culinary Tradition in Slovenia', *Traditiones* 41/2 (2012), 91–104.



Fig. 2. Richly decorated Christmas bread, poprtnik, Svibno, 2019. (Photo by Maja Godina Golijs)

in space and time and is, like many other material cultural components, the reference point for the self-identification of the group that it represents to others.¹⁰

Today, unlike in past times, the baking and use of Christmas bread, *poprtnik*, in Svibno, is associated with some customs formerly unknown or practised in the community. Christmas bread is now blessed in the local church on the eve of Three Kings Day/Epiphany (5 January), an occasion on which housewives also display their beautiful bakery products. It is an evening when members of the community of different generations gather in the church, even those who do not usually attend worship. This event is primarily social and is often associated with singing performances by male and female choirs, and with the viewing and informal evaluation of Christmas bread. However, it is also combined with the celebration of Mass and the blessing of the loaves – liturgical acts, which otherwise would be unlikely to have been attended in such large numbers by the inhabitants of Svibno. This development neatly illustrates the findings of heritage researcher Kirshenblatt-Gimblett – that heritage, which is alive and an integral part of community life, significantly influences the community, and that the community influences heritage.¹¹

On the following day (6 January) the bread is consumed, and some traditional customs are performed at that time. Similar to what had happened in past times, a mother who cuts the Christmas bread, *poprtnik*, raises a piece of it into the air, and the child has to jump up to reach it. The more the child jumps, the more the child will grow over the coming year. All household members consume *poprtnik* bread; a piece of this bread is still, today, distributed to pigs and cattle, and crumbs are thrown to the hens and chickens. The people believe that all of these acts should ensure a good harvest and the health of living beings on the farm. In order to provide strength and health, people in Svibno consume pieces of Christmas bread from neighbours and relatives because they believe that the more pieces of different bread they eat, the more powerful and healthy they will be.

As the homemakers from Svibno pointed out during my fieldwork, they care about this rich Christmas-bread tradition and keep it alive among the young people. The exchange of squirrels and the sharing of them among family members, neighbours,

10 Buchli, Victor: 'Introduction', in Buchli, Victor ed.: *The Material Culture Reader* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2002), 1–23.

11 Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara: 'Intangible Heritage as Metacultural Production', *Museum International* 1–2 (2004), 52–65.

and other living beings on the farm, symbolically expresses the unity of living, and the importance of connection for survival on mountain farms in the coming year. These actions associated with Christmas bread have retained their social significance despite globalisation and the modernisation of life on mountain farms, and they have also become an essential part of local identity. As ethnologists note in their studies, food is much more than being just a source of satisfying basic biological needs,¹² as it plays a vital role in the self-representation of individuals, social groups, regions, and nations. In particular, it emphasises the age, originality, and difference and uniqueness of particular foods, dishes, and food-related practices.¹³

Today, *poprtnik* bread from Svibno is a recognisable element of the cultural heritage of that place – which distinguishes it from other areas in the Posavje region. The women of the Farmers' Association Arnika, proudly present it as a local speciality at events both at home and abroad, whether these be occasions related to culinary cultural heritage or to tourism. The Svibno members of the Farmers' Association Arnika promote the traditional baking of Christmas bread without modern ingredients and additives and they assist in the transfer of this knowledge to the younger generations through workshops. For young women, they organise baking courses on the premises of the Arnika Svibno Peasant Women's Association. Even more essential and extensive are the classes on how to make and use *poprtnik* bread, which takes place at the Svibno Primary School. Every year, at the beginning of December, usually for St. Nicholas Day (6 December), lessons on the baking of *poprtnik* bread are prepared for elementary school children in the first and second grades at the school. Children listen with interest to the explanations about how the bread is made and try their hand at preparing Christmas bread and dough decorations. According to the informants, the children's interest in the baking of *poprtnik* is high, and also in the exchange and the tasting of the bread, that occurs later, because, already at the beginning of December, many children can hardly wait for this festive event to take place.

12 Wiegmann, Günter: *Alltags und Festspeisen in Mitteleuropa. Innovationen, Strukturen und Regionen vom späten Mittelalter bis zum 20. Jahrhundert* (Münster: Waxmann, 2006); Köstlin, Konrad: 'Kitchen Stories', in Bartsch, Silke and Lysaght, Patricia eds.: *Places of Food Production. Origin, Identity, Imagination* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2017), 15–29.

13 Rittig-Beljak, Nives and Belaj, Melanija eds.: *Turist kao gost – prilozi kulinarskom turizmu* ('Tourist as guest – contribution to culinary tourism') (Zagreb: Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku, 2009); Brulotte, Ronda L. and Di Giovine, Michael A.: *Edible Identities: Food as Cultural Heritage* (London, New York: Ashgate, 2014).

In the area of Svibno in the Sava Hills, in contrast to other Slovene territories, the tradition of baking the Christmas bread, *poprtnik*, has remained uninterrupted, and is thus a living tradition still today. Currently, about 35 farms are involved in the baking of this Christmas bread and in the carrying out of routine rituals associated with its preparation. The baking of Christmas bread in Svibno has a vital social and cultural function as it connects people and encourages them to work together in their community. This tradition has become part of the local identity of the inhabitants of the place Svibno, a tradition which they present to visitors and also include in their events for, and gatherings of, the locals. Today, *poprtnik* bread also features as a gift that is presented to the most important visitors to Svibno.

CONCLUSION

Poprtnik from Svibno is an example of living intangible cultural heritage. According to the UNESCO Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage, food is defined as an area that contains much of human creativity, knowledge, beliefs, norms, and values, and plays a significant role in the lives of individuals, families, and communities. This definition of food as part of intangible cultural heritage focuses on the practices and knowledge related to the preparation of food and its consumption, as well as on the incorporation of food in rituals, customs, and social events of the community, and its role in spiritual life.¹⁴

Because *poprtnik* bread from Svibno meets all of the established criteria, it was entered in the Slovenian Register of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, in 2013. Currently, there are fifteen units in the field of cuisine and food in the Slovenian Register of Intangible Cultural Heritage.¹⁵ The promotion and protection of this heritage is mainly managed by the Farmers' Association Arnika and the Parnas Institute – the latter organises training for heritage holders, as well as meetings,

14 Židov, Nena: 'Certificiranje kulinarike in Unescova Konvencija o varovanju nesnovne kulturne dediščine' ('Culinary Certification and the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage'), in Brence, Andrej ed.: *6. srečanje kulturne dediščine Slovenije 2017: Prehrana v Registru nesnovne kulturne dediščine in njeno certificiranje* ('6th Meeting of the Cultural Heritage of Slovenia 2017: Food in the Register of Intangible Cultural Heritage and its Certification') (Ptuj: Pokrajinski muzej Ptuj – Ormož, 2017), 10–12.

15 Židov, Nena: 'Prehrana med nesnovno kulturno dediščino in certificiranjem' ('Food between intangible cultural heritage and certification'), in Jerin, Anja – Pukl, Adela and Nena Židov, Nena eds.: *Dobra jed se sama ponuja. Prehrana kot nesnovna kulturna dediščina Slovenije* ('Good food offers itself. Food as intangible cultural heritage of Slovenia') (Ljubljana: Slovenski etnografski muzej, 2021), 14–17.



*Fig. 3. Learning to bake Christmas bread, poprtnik, at Svibno elementary school, 2019.
(Photo by the Farmers' Association Arnika)*

exhibitions, and so on. However, cooperation with the Parnas Institute, which operates as a private institution that also seeks profit from promoting heritage, has become challenging for the peasant women from Svibno, who, in recent years, make *poprtnik* bread. In order to participate in joint events, exhibitions of the bread *poprtnik*, and similar activities, the Parnas Institute requires payment or registration fees, which can be too much of a financial burden for many farm homemakers. Consequently, even the initially successful cooperation between the Farmers' Association Arnika and the Parnas Institute in protecting and promoting Svibno *poprtnik* bread, is regressing, and the situation raises some fundamental questions, such as: Who can dispose of, and promote, Food Heritage, who owns it, and who can generate income from it, and in what way?

This situation is also connected to the question of the role of experts and ethnological institutions in the process of the commercialisation and the marketing of food heritage. These experts and institutions have researched and promoted the intangible cultural heritage aspects without such commercial purposes in mind; in the Slovenian case this was done by the associates of the *Register of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Slovenia* project. As Regina Bendix has noted, activity in the field of heritage research and protection, as well as participation in bureaucratic procedures in the field of cultural heritage phenomena, carriers and registers, provide a direct insight into multifaceted metacultural operational interventions – into the procedures, actors and institutions involved. Together, these elements transform landscapes, things and practices into a certified cultural heritage.¹⁶ For this reason, we must be aware that as food heritage researchers, we are not only observers but also experts, and that we are also co-creators of the authorised heritage discourse.¹⁷ Because of this our role in this process carries significant professional, personal and social responsibility.

16 Bendix, Regina F.: 'Introduction', in Bendix, Regina F. – Eggert, Aditya and Arnika Peselmann eds.: *Heritage Regimes and the State* (Göttingen Studies in Cultural Property 6), (Göttingen: Universitätsverlag Göttingen, 2012), 11–20.

17 Godina Golija, Maja and Ledinek Lozej, Špela: 'Pomen in cilji projektov ohranjanja dediščine prehrane: Register nesnovne kulturne dediščine, Etnofolk in AlpFoodway' ('The Importance and Objectives of Projects Aimed at Safeguarding Food Heritage: Register of Intangible Cultural Heritage, Etnofolk and AlpFoodway'), *Etnolog* 28 (2018), 85–103.

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SARAH SHULTZ

CONTESTING A CHANGING COMMUNITY WITH TRADITIONAL FOODS

RACE, CLASS, AND HOT CHICKEN IN NASHVILLE,
TENNESSEE, USA

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on how white middle-class Nashvillians adapt hot chicken as a local symbol and explores how ‘white trash’ hot chicken parties make it possible to use food to reclaim public space and to play with stigma in a way that is empowering for some, while simultaneously contributing to a wider culture of ‘hegemonic whiteness.’

For many moderately-sized U.S. cities,¹ such as Nashville, culinary tourism has become a major source of revenue.² Developing or capitalising on an already existing cuisine, or on a regionally unique dish, is especially helpful for cities looking to profit from current gourmet-food trends that emphasise authenticity and regional variety.³

1 Reference to this study: Sarah Shultz: Contesting a Changing Community with Traditional Foods: Race, Class, and Hot Chicken in Nashville, Tennessee, USA. In Anikó Báti and Patricia Lysaght (eds): *Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage*. Budapest: ELTE RCH Institute of Ethnology – Museum of Ethnography, 2025. pp. 243–252.

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2 This paper is adapted from a chapter of my dissertation, which explored the connections between consumption of piquant foods in a culinary tourist context and expressions of racial identity in two case studies: East London and Nashville (Shultz, Sarah, ‘Spice, Culinary Tourism, and Expressions of Whiteness in London, England, and Nashville, Tennessee’, Ph.D. Dissertation. Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2023). This work is based on 12 months of on-site fieldwork in Nashville visiting hot chicken restaurants, along with seventeen interviews recorded with nineteen locals. The interviews I am referencing here were with a group of 30-and-40-something middle- to upper middle-class white locals, who mostly know one another and work in local media, non-profits and other organisations that are connected with city government.

3 Johnston, Josée and Baumann, Shyon: *Foodies: Democracy and Distinction in the Gourmet Foodscape* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

Nashville is one such city in the American South. It has seen significant growth in outside interest from tourists in recent years, and has developed a signature dish, hot chicken, for touristic consumption. The population of the Nashville metropolitan area has increased by 49% over the past 20 years.⁴

This growth is the calculated result of the work of various development organisations, among them large restaurant groups like Strategic Hospitality, whose founders

envisioned a network of concept-driven 'social destinations' throughout the city that not only would elevate Nashville's food and bar scene for locals, but also would create an innovative hospitality culture that could boost the city's street cred far beyond the I-40 loop – particularly among mobile Millennials and young professionals who have the choice to live anywhere,⁵

as one Forbes article puts it. A main draw for people visiting Nashville is the opportunity to try Nashville Hot Chicken, an extra spicy fried chicken served on a slice of white bread with pickle slices on top, that was invented by members of Nashville's Black community in the 1950s, and sold almost exclusively in historically Black neighbourhoods, like North and East Nashville, until the mid-aughts.⁶

Nashville's transformation has meant a significant change in Nashville's built landscape, foodways, and in local identity.⁷ While the city has long prided itself on having more in common with a small town than with a major metropolis, developers were concerned that its reputation was a little too old-fashioned. An article in *The New York Times*, dating from 2013, for example,⁸ described Nashville as 'a city once embarrassed by its Grand Ole Opry roots.'⁹ This old-fashioned, rural image of the city, and its subsequent transformation into a cooler, more sophisticated tourist

4 FRED, 'Resident Population in Nashville-Davidson – Murfreesboro – Franklin, TN (MSA)' (25 March 2022).

5 Taylor, Peter Lane: 'Nashville is One of America's Hottest Cities Right Now and It's Not Just the Hockey', *Forbes Magazine*.

6 Phillips, Betsy: 'Race, Credit and Hot Chicken', *Nashville Scene* (29 August 2016); Martin, Rachel L., *Hot, Hot Chicken: A Nashville Story* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2021).

7 Taylor: 'Nashville is One of America's Hottest Cities Right Now and It's Not Just the Hockey'; Petersen, Anne Helen, 'How Nashville Became One Big Bachelorette Party', *BuzzFeed News* (29 March 2018); Lastoe, Stacey, 'There's a New Bachelorette Capital, and It's Not Vegas', *Cable News Network* (1 May 2019); Salviati, Chris, '2010s in Review: Which Metros Changed the Most?' Apartment List – More than 5 Million Apartments for Rent. *Apartment List* (20 September 2019).

8 The Editors of GQ: 'Nowville: The GQ Guide to Nashville, Tennessee', *GQ* (2 July 2012); Kollar, Leena: '10 Reasons Why You Should Visit Nashville', *Culture Trip. The Culture Trip* (2 May 2017).

9 Severson, Kim: 'Nashville's Latest Big Hit Could Be the City Itself', *The New York Times* (8 January 2013).

oasis, are two topics about which locals feel ambivalence.¹⁰ One person who grew up in the city described it like this:

You're in Nashville now. You know that we have a very complicated relationship with tourism. I'm not sure what started out as a real excitement because of what it did for the economy and what it did for the restaurants, if you want to get specific about it, has turned, over the past couple of years, to, I won't say revulsion. But certainly, you know, a resentment where locals don't, they're not necessarily pleased to see these four-storey restaurants getting all the business downtown.¹¹

For locals, the city's rapid physical and cultural growth are experienced as extreme, and at times disorienting, as housing costs rise and neighbourhoods are razed and rebuilt.

Hot chicken symbolises both Nashville's past and its present. It has been a part of the local cuisine since at least the 1950s, and was largely unknown outside of the local Black community until the then Mayor, Bill Purcell, organised the first 'Music City Hot Chicken Festival', in 2007.¹² Since then, hot chicken has become an iconic, must-try culinary attraction, which has been made ultra popular by one specific franchise: 'Hattie B's Hot Chicken'.¹³ Hattie B's has been successful because its owners have the capital to open locations in the trendiest and most accessible parts of the city.

Starting in 2015, locals began to debate whether the outsize success of white-owned hot chicken restaurants like Hattie B's selling a dish invented by Black Nashvillians, counted as cultural appropriation.¹⁴ This debate received a lot of attention in the media, and there was pushback from some locals, which I explore in my dissertation.¹⁵ Here, the focus is instead on how understandings and expressions of white identity play a part in the engagement with hot chicken as a symbol of Nashville from the perspective of white locals. For this group, hot chicken is still closely associated with

10 Shultz: 'Spice, Culinary Tourism, and Expressions of Whiteness in London, England, and Nashville, Tennessee.'

11 Fieldwork Interview with author, May 2020.

12 Martin, Rachel L.: 'How Hot Chicken Really Happened,' *The Bitter Southerner* (1 April 2015).

13 Embiricos, George: 'Meet the Man Who Launched the Nashville Hot Chicken Craze,' *Food Republic* (25 August 2016).

14 Martin: 'How Hot Chicken Really Happened'; Phillips, Betsy: 'Race, Credit and Hot Chicken,' *Nashville Scene* (29 August 2016); Chamberlain, Chris: 'Race, Credit and Hot Chicken, Part 2,' *Nashville Scene* (4 May 2021); Davison, Devita: 'Black Food Matters: Race and Equity in the Good Food Movement'. Lecture presented at 'Change Food Fest', New York City, 11th–13th November 2016.

15 Shultz: 'Spice, Culinary Tourism, and Expressions of Whiteness in London, England, and Nashville, Tennessee.'

the historically Black neighbourhoods where it was originally sold, and memories of eating at restaurants in these neighbourhoods are presented as adventures involving a lot of inherent risk. This emphasis on the distance travelled to eat hot chicken, as well as the perceived risk associated with neighbourhoods like East and North Nashville, reflects the city's history of segregation into Black and white neighbourhoods – another topic I discuss in greater detail elsewhere.¹⁶

Questions about how the city is laid out, and which people belong in which parts, are of special interest at the present time, as the influx of newcomers gentrify its neighborhoods and radically alter its demographics. As mentioned, Nashville previously had a sort of hokey, old-fashioned image that developers have tried to shed over the past two decades. As a region, the American South itself is highly stereotyped by the rest of the country, and Southern foods are often portrayed as being unhealthy and cheap.¹⁷ Within this context, the experience of going out for hot chicken provides an opportunity for these white Nashvillians to see themselves from the perspective of people from other parts of the country, and the world, as these restaurants are often packed with curious tourists.

Class comes into play in these situations. While doing fieldwork, I was surprised at how often white locals described eating hot chicken as something they do with colleagues, often during the working day. This was unexpected, considering hot chicken's reputation for imparting both short and long-term extreme physical side effects. But I think that there is the potential for pleasure in the visibility that accompanies these temporary displays of extreme discomfort; in letting loose in such a way that physicality overrides middle-class professionalism:

I had a white dress shirt on, I had an undershirt underneath, and by the end of the meal the white dress shirt was off. I was crying, I was; snot was coming out of my mouth. The only sensation of pleasure I had was when my friend would exhale, and the exhale from him would cool down the spice on my face. The woman, there was a woman in line, as our chicken came out, she walked past us and just said, 'Boy, you're gonna get the mud butt [diarrhoea]' [...]. But it was a spectacle, like people were just watching us.¹⁸

16 Shultz: 'Spice, Culinary Tourism, and Expressions of Whiteness in London, England, and Nashville, Tennessee'; see also Martin: 'How Hot Chicken Really Happened'.

17 Pucciarelli, Deanna: 'The Southern Diet: A Historical View on Food Consumption and how the Region's Foodways gets a Bad Rap', *Nutrition Today* 55/4 (2020), 157–162.

18 Fieldwork interview with author, June 2020.

This man's description of eating extra hot chicken with a co-worker during a lunch break is graphic. When I asked him if this experience made him less likely to eat hot chicken again, he said: 'No, we enjoyed it. One, for the spectacle. Two, for the endorphin rush you get when you eat spicy food.'¹⁹ Here, being visibly incongruous is a central part of the pleasure connected with eating hot chicken. Perhaps the physical discomfort associated with the experience is somehow associated with this pleasure: standing out, being seen, is uncomfortable, but, like an endorphin rush, it can be addictive.

This emphasis on the physical side-effects of eating hot chicken is connected in interesting ways with the tendency to do so during the working day, or in the company of co-workers. Food is highly symbolic, and deep-fried foods, or foods high in fat more generally, are coded in ways that associate them with class. In interviewing middle-class parents from the United Kingdom, for example, sociologists Louise MacAllister and Suzanne Hocknell found that interviewees engaged in performances of distaste towards fatty foods that are associated with people of a lower socio-economic class; thus, in performing their horror at the idea of feeding their children things like crisps, the parents demonstrated that they were aware that there is a 'correct' way to parent that 'falls into line with traditionally white, middle-class practices and knowledge.'²⁰

By going on these work-outings to eat a deep-fried, traditionally-Southern food that can cause an extreme physical reaction, these white Nashville locals can be seen to be flaunting white middle-class practices and ways of knowing. In speaking with locals, I came to understand that milder heat-levels of chicken, like those served at Hattie B's, are considered to be 'for tourists', while one can tell who is a local Nashvillian by observing how much heat a person can tolerate. In revelling in this experience, where they are highly visible as Southern or as locals, to tourists and transplants, they are playing with, and even embracing, the stigmas associated with Nashville's former reputation, with being Southern, and even with being seen as 'white trash'.

'White trash' is a symbolically-charged label. The belief in white superiority has been used to justify the enslavement of non-whites, and to account for disparities in

¹⁹ Fieldwork interview with author, June 2020.

²⁰ MacAllister, Louise and Hocknell, Suzanne: 'A Sticky Situation? Fatty Distaste and the Embodied Performance of Class', in Falconer, Emily ed.: *Space, Taste and Affect: Atmospheres that Shape the Way We Eat* (Abingdon-on-Thames, UK: Routledge, 2020), 38.

health and quality of life in a way that does not admit to systemic inequality. But despite this supposed inherent superiority, not all people who appear to be white are equally successful. Whiteness is both a social position, and a kind of practice, and this practice can be performed correctly or incorrectly. Sociologist Matt Wray, details several different explanations offered to account for this 'poor white paradox' over the course of American history.²¹ He notes that the explanations share an emphasis on the body: reflecting either some essential difference from other white people passed down through the blood, or a sickness, like hookworm disease or pellagra, that caused physical symptoms and a marked change in appearance. This physical difference, often portrayed as especially abject or grotesque, was crucial to the maintenance of white supremacy, because it provided an explanation for the fact that, although white people are not all equally successful, that fact did not threaten the baseline belief in the inherent superiority of 'whiteness'.

In listening to white locals describe their experiences when eating hot chicken, often surrounded by colleagues and by tourists, there is a sense of spectacle that is explicitly physical: one where locals suffer, sweat, and burn, by choice, in the process of consuming a meal that has become representatively-symbolic of their city, and that has helped to offer it a new image to present to the rest of the country. Making spectacles of themselves, eating chicken so hot it turns their faces red, shucking their dress shirts and sweating with their co-workers, is an opportunity to play with, and to perform, the identity of being 'poor white trash' that is both critically nostalgic²² and defiant, as it occurs in front of an audience of outsiders.

Many white locals whom I interviewed mentioned attending 'white trash bashes' where hot chicken was served. One of these events was a fundraiser for a local charity held at one of the bars on Broadway, Nashville's main attraction for tourists looking to dance and drink in 'honky tonks' – country music bars.²³ This bar, which has since closed, was described to me as a kind of spoof on the other establishments on the street. This 'white trash bash' included contests to see who could eat the hottest chicken. Attendees were also encouraged to dress up in denim cut-offs and

21 Wray, Matt: *Not Quite White: White Trash and the Boundaries of Whiteness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).

22 Cashman, Ray: 'Critical Nostalgia and Material Culture in Northern Ireland.' *Journal of American Folklore* 119/472 (2006), 137–160.

23 Sayers, William: 'Honky-Tonk: Lexicogenesis and Etymology,' *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes, and Reviews* 35/1 (2022), 12, available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/0895769X.2019.1703627>.

fake tattoo sleeves. An organiser of the event that I spoke with, described the costumes participants wore as 'truly disgusting in the best way possible'.²⁴

One local explained that the idea of having this kind of event originated in potential culture-clashes between lifetime, and new, Nashville residents.

Like, jean cut-off shorts started becoming a thing? Where people were more, I think, because Nashville got, you know, maybe a little more progressive, we started realising that cut-off jean shorts were maybe not as normal in other parts of the country as they were in the South. So then that kind of became a thing that we would joke about.²⁵

In taking these elements of the stereotypes of poor white Southerners and adding in hot chicken as its centerpiece – a symbol of Nashville's past, as well as an important tourist attraction of its present – these locals are using the consumption of hot chicken as a means by which to caricature the physical abjection associated with the term 'white trash' as a form of play that caricatures the stereotypes associated with white Southern culture.

CONCLUSION

It is possible to view these performances of abject spectacle, particularly in the context of the 'white trash' hot-chicken parties, as a kind of resistance against the negative, old-fashioned reputation Nashville so recently left behind, and against the attendant development that has made the area increasingly difficult for locals to live in. But there is more going on here. White trash-studies scholars like Dina Smith argue that 'white trash' is 'a *border position* between white privilege and black disenfranchisement'.²⁶ Sociologist Matthew Hughey notes, that hegemonic whiteness is formed, in part, 'through marginalizing practices of "being white" that fail to exemplify supposed essential differences between the races'.²⁷ Poor whites play a crucial part in the construction of white hegemony, because they provide the template for how to perform 'whiteness' incorrectly. The white middle-class effectively uses the concept of 'poor white trash' to construct itself.

²⁴ Fieldwork interview with author, September 2020.

²⁵ Fieldwork interview with author, May 2020.

²⁶ Smith, Dina: 'Cultural Studies' Misfit: White Trash Studies, *The Mississippi Quarterly* 57/3 (2004), 370.

²⁷ Hughey, Matthew W.: *White Bound: Nationalists, Antiracists, and the Shared Meanings of Race* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 187.

Middle-class white Nashvillians, who use hot chicken as a prop in their play with a stigmatised poor white identity, are processing how outsiders view both the South, and Nashville specifically, but their toying with symbols of stigmatisation are just games: they can take off the cut-offs and put the dress shirts back on whenever they choose. In playing with these caricatures, they prove that they are capable of performing white middle-class identity correctly by modelling its opposite. By temporarily playing at being 'white trash', these white Nashville locals reassert their identities *as* white. This makes it possible for them to evolve along with their city, by demonstrating that they are competent in 'hegemonic whiteness', and aware of the proper behaviours associated with it. Their claiming of hot chicken as heritage – a dish created by the local Black community, with its own symbolic weight for that community – in their performances of being 'white trash', further reinforces racial inequality in the city.

I want to make it clear that I am not attempting to vilify these activities, and, individually, many of these white Nashvillians were committed to anti-racism work in their personal lives. But I think it is important to make space for interpretations of identity-performance that are intersectional: in holding these white trash themed parties, locals are participating in an empowering activity that reasserts their claim on a space that has changed greatly both physically and culturally over the past twenty years. At the same time, these activities reinforce racial inequality in Nashville, through this same assertion of ownership of the city, especially in light of the ways in which visits to hot chicken restaurants in historically Black neighbourhoods were framed as dangerous adventures in the narratives of many white locals, as well as the larger questions of cultural appropriation surrounding hot chicken's status as a culinary tourist attraction. Their ability to temporarily play with the stigma associated with being 'white trash' without suffering lasting social consequences as a result should not be overlooked, especially when their claims to ownership over hot chicken as heritage reinforce structural inequality.

This paper offers a case study of how the use of food in identity construction can fulfill specific goals for small, localised groups, while simultaneously aligning itself with the ideology of white supremacy in U.S. culture, regardless of individual intentions. The ways in which Nashville hot chicken is contested provide examples of vernacular expressions of white identity in one specific local context. These uses of hot chicken also make visible both how white identity is activated in everyday life, and how these everyday activations of white identity are interconnected with larger social systems of structural inequality. This work provides one example of the ways

in which folklore's emphasis on everyday traditional activities and expressions of identity provides a unique perspective on larger social issues, like structural inequality, that can help make sense of the complex relationships between identity, inequality, place, and heritage.

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YRSA LINDQVIST

FOOD RECIPES AS CULTURAL HERITAGE AND HISTORICAL SOURCE

ABSTRACT

In recent decades, interest in foodways, in women's lives, and in everyday matters, has increased. Women's handwritten recipes books – a combination of culinary recipes, medical remedies and household tips – are especially valuable for cultural understanding. In these domestic manuals one can learn, among other things, about food consumption, trade routes, class aspects and social markers, agriculture, and everyday skills.

In this article I call attention to the importance of making archival material, in this case handwritten recipe books, available for as wide an audience as possible, by referring to an ongoing project involving digital publishing.¹ The project in question is called *Historiska recept* ('Historical recipes') and is funded by the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland, an association with large archive collections and which is also engaged in research programmes and publishing. The aim of the project is to provide researchers and an interested public with the tools necessary for the study of as many early recipe books from Finland as can be found.² The project also seeks to step out of theory and to introduce a practical purpose to the material, by offering cooking classes based on the historical recipes for those interested in food and history.

1 Reference to this study: Yrsa Lindqvist: Food Recipes as Cultural Heritage and Historical Source. In Anikó Báti and Patricia Lysaght (eds.): *Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage*. Budapest: ELTE RCH Institute of Ethnology – Museum of Ethnography, 2025. pp. 253–263.

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2 Jonasson, Maren and Norrback, Märtha: 'Finnish Manuscript Recipe Books, ca.1730–1850: Cross-Regional Influences, Copied Recipes, and Authorship Issues', in Kernan, Sarah Peters and Müllneritsch, Helga eds.; *Culinary Texts in Context, 1500–1800. Manuscript Recipe Books in Early Modern Europe* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2024).

RECIPES FROM THE PAST

In this context, historical recipes refer mainly to recipes from the 18th and the early 19th centuries. At that period, Finland was still a part of Sweden, an outlying land in the eastern part of the Swedish state, separated from the rest of Sweden by the Gulf of Bothnia and the Gulf of Finland. Finnish, as a written language, composed of several loan words from Swedish and Latin, and mainly used in religious contexts, was still developing at that time. The upper classes, closest to the nation's official networks, were Swedish speaking, and higher education was likewise provided in the Swedish language. The language of most the written sources from that time – such as the recipe books mentioned in this article, is, therefore, Swedish.

Printed cookbooks are popular collecting items worldwide, while manuscript recipe books have been largely overlooked and are a misunderstood genre. In her book, *Preserving on Paper*, Kristine Kowalchuk points out how such manuscripts can enlighten a range of studies such as those in literature, history and culture, as well as book history, women's and culinary studies, and the history of medicine.³ We hope that knowledge of the digital platform *Historiska recept.fi* will become widespread and that the material it contains will thereby become available for researchers in a broad sense, in different disciplines and studies, as mentioned by Kowalchuk.

During the first two years of the project (2020–2022), six manuscripts were digitalised, transcribed and published.⁴ The manuscripts were found in archives, museums, and in private collections, and were written between 1720–1730 and 1850. They originate from the manors of the nobility and the local elite.⁵

The Finnish elite and nobility at that time lived comfortably but not in opulence. The manors were, in comparison with those on the Continent, rather unassuming, and

3 Kowalchuk, Kristine ed.: *Preserving on Paper. Seventeenth-Century Englishwomen's Receipt Books* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 4–6.

4 The project continues for 3 more years. By the end of 2025, therefore, the digital platform will host approximately 15 additional manuscripts, some of them dated as recent as the 20th century.

5 The manuscripts are from: Stensböle manor located outside of Porvoo and owned by the noble Rotkirch family; the Wijkman-von Ackern family from Turku; Louhisaari Castle, located north of Turku and owned by the Mannerheim family; Nauvo, located southwest of Turku and owned by the noble family af Schultén; Hautaa manor located northeast of Tampere and owned by the noble Mellin family; and from Herttoniemi manor located outside of Helsinki and owned by the noble Cronstedt family.

agriculture was the main source of income, often alongside an official income from the state.⁶ While their daily diet did not differ significantly from that of the rest of the population, nevertheless, their social status entailed, or presupposed, a generous representation of goods, including foods, that showed the prosperity of the household. The ethnologist Anna-Maria Åström, specialising in the study of the manors of eastern Finland, mentions that the festive seasons were concentrated around Christmas and midsummer. In high-status circles, it was important to highlight the family's status via its material world.⁷

The female head of the household was responsible for, and would have control over, all work that touched on the household. Being self-sustaining meant that virtually all of the food for the household would have been produced and refined on the farm, and the raw materials would then be preserved and stored for the family's entire winter's needs. For almost half of the year, the only opportunities for increasing the household's food supply were by means of fishing, hunting and butchering. Therefore, a lot of the manuscript recipes are about how to preserve food products using different methods, and also about how to use the preserved items in the cooking.

It is difficult to say to what extent the recipes were used in the households and families to which they belonged. Some of the recipes contain ingredients that, given the transport possibilities of the time, could be difficult to obtain in distant Finland. Fresh oysters were available nowhere nearer than the Swedish west coast, nor were lobsters either for that matter. In one of the manuscripts, however, there are recipes in which both fresh and salt-preserved oysters are used. In another of the collections, there is also a recipe for 'pickling oysters in the English way', with French wine, wine vinegar, nutmeg and pepper, after which they were put in jars. The handwritten recipe manuscripts are, nevertheless, more personal documents than, for example, printed cookbooks, and it can be assumed that especially the advice and home remedies that concern health and the curing diseases, that they contain, lean on experience, as do the recipes that concern textile dyeing.⁸

⁶ Husbands on manorial estates also often worked for the state or in the military, for example, and had, therefore, an income additional to that derived from agriculture at the manors.

⁷ Åström, Anna-Maria: 'Kolonialvaror och vardagsting i den europeiska marginalen' ('Colonial Goods and Everyday Things in the Margin of Europe'), *Finskt museum* (2010–2011), (2011), 7, 19.

⁸ Norrback, Märtha: 'Bröd och bot' ('Bread and cure'). <<https://historiskarecept.sls.fi/sv/ebook/norrback-brod-och-bot.epub>> accessed 23 October 2024.

When it comes to ascertaining which foodstuffs the households had access to, it is more advantageous to look at the records that the housewives kept about purchases. In an account book for the year 1764 kept at a manor near Helsinki, it can be seen that among the household's purchases were Baltic herring, herring, salmon, bream, butter, livestock, venison, eggs, fresh fish, 1 cock, wheat flour, meat, turnips, Swedish turnips, cabbage, hops, and 2 cows for slaughtering for household meat. In addition, there were purchases of salt, sugar, tea, coffee, almonds, figs, rose hip, anise, ginger, cinnamon, saffron, nutmeg, cloves, bay leaf, orange peel, olive oil, syrup, sweet wine, vinegar, and muscat wine. All ingredients are found in the recipes from that time.⁹

In the household account books and in preserved receipts, information about the kitchen utensils that were needed in a particular household – such as colanders, baking tins, graters and funnels – can also be found. New customs such as the holding of coffee parties required more refined and more abundant pastries.¹⁰ Recipe books, and cash receipts, as well as farm-accounting data related to housekeeping, provide insights into both the individual's living environment and the women's collective work.

TASTING HISTORY

Personally, I find great pleasure in highlighting the recipes in a practical way – they are, after all, intended for the act of cooking. In a digital platform hosting thousands of historical recipes, it is possible to make various types of comparisons between them, to search for individual ingredients, and to categorise and experiment in a way that would be much more laborious if using the original manuscript. But how can one know what the cooked food tasted like and what it is that these recipes describe. The answer is that we do not know, and the reason for this is, that so many of the recipe components used back then, were different compared to those in use now. Thus, in terms of taste, what has to be borne in mind is the nature of the raw materials used, which were often stored and pickled, the preparation methods, the vessels used, and above all the flavours which seem to have changed quite a bit over the course of two hundred years. An example of this is the recipe for soup of dried pike:

⁹ SLS 1220, The SLS Archive, The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland.

¹⁰ Åström: 'Kolonialvaror och vardagsting i den europeiska marginalen', 16–17.

‘Take raisins, gingerbread, wheat bread, vinegar, sugar, boil it together, beat in the pike, [add] saffron if necessary.’¹¹

Pike was one of the fish species that was dried, although mainly for the preparation of stockfish.¹² But in the recipe above, one might wonder if the step of soaking the pike, or the step to add water in making the soup, have been omitted. If not, the only liquid in use is vinegar, which hardly makes a soup edible. Today, raisins, gingerbread and saffron, have Christmas connotations.

Not all of the recipes featured in the manuscripts are remarkable. Recipes for pastries of various kinds are by far the most-commonly found there and what surprises us most about them today is the number of eggs used – up to 40 eggs could be included in a cake, for example. Bitter almonds were also used in a quantity that is not recommended today, as they contain amygdalin, which can release hydrogen cyanide after ingestion. Lemons were also used abundantly, which is surprising, given the distance from Finland to the lemon trees’ habitat.

During the cooking classes, many questions arise and lead to discussions about the ingredients being used, which sometimes seem exotic, and sometimes just remarkable. One also reflects, in an historical perspective, on matters such as transport, sustainability, economy, innovations, and on all the knowledge that women must have had in order to keep a household afloat and, when custom dictated, to show the family’s social position via dishes. This was achieved by the inclusion of wine, lemons and almonds in the recipes, and especially by the frequently-mentioned use of spices, then almost unknown among the peasantry. Cinnamon is the most common spice appearing in the recipes, closely followed by pepper and nutmeg. Other spices used were ginger, cardamom, saffron and anise. The inclusion of spices was a measure of status reserved for wealthy households.¹³

Another thing that is different from our time is that the food was served *à la français*, that is, that all of the dishes were served at once, and were not divided into starters, main courses and desserts. The food was usually sweet, sour and spicy, respectively.

11 The von Ackern manuscript. <[https://historiskarecept.sls.fi/sv/collection/2560/text/85082?views=\(type:readingtext\)&q=torr&q=g%C3%A4dda](https://historiskarecept.sls.fi/sv/collection/2560/text/85082?views=(type:readingtext)&q=torr&q=g%C3%A4dda)> accessed 23 October 2024.

12 Talve, Ilmar: *Folkligt kosthåll i Finland* ('Peasantry Food in Finland') (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1977), 35.

13 Swahn, Jan-Öjvind: *Boken om kryddor: historien om kryddornas ursprung, bruk och egenskaper*, ('Book of Spices: the history of the origin of spices, use and quality') (Solna: Rabén Prisma, 1995).

Preparation over an open fire or in a wood-burning oven also added a dimension of smoke to the food that cannot be achieved in a modern kitchen.

CULTURAL HERITAGE IN ACTION

The popularisation of history via food has been done in the media, in the British infotainment series such as *The Supersizers*, and in Sweden in the corresponding concept called *Historieätarna* ('the History Eaters').¹⁴ In these contexts, the programme-makers get fully immersed in the topic, also imitating different historical eras via clothing and other props. Historical sources are used and researchers in historical lifestyles are called in as experts.

My own experiences of giving cooking classes are that historical recipes give a concrete insight into life in another era. In a Finnish context, the recipe ingredients are testament to the fact that there was great social diversity in Finnish society at the time. This is in contrast to the more usual narrative about the Finnish food culture, which has concentrated on the eating habits of the common people, about crop failure, and about famine and scarcity during the cold winter months, when the ground was frozen and when the people were limited to the food products which they had preserved and stored.

For today's people, the manuscript recipes often provide a new insight into the fact that luxury also existed in historical times. What was deemed luxury then was unattainable for most citizens – the use of spices, lemons, almond flour, and rose water, not to mention lobster and oysters – which can still be considered luxury products in countries like Finland where these items are only available by means of imports.

During the cooking classes, one also reflects on the appearance of the food – usually all of the dishes get a similar brown colour – and its texture. Puddings of various kinds were a popular dish in the 18th century, which also gives rise to discussions about the quality or state of people's teeth 200 years ago, and to what extent one could chew food that was not well prepared.

By bringing archival material of the kind mentioned in this article to a general audience, discussions are born, and insights that many would never otherwise reflect

14 See <<https://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historie%C3%A4tarna>> accessed 23 October 2024.

on come to the fore. The material also provides insights into the fact that everyday documents can be of great importance for our perception of history, and that even our own recipe collections can be of value to new generations in the future – provided they are saved and archived for posterity as one of the many forms of cultural heritage.



APPENDIX



Fig. 1. The process of transforming an historical recipe from a document to something edible is fascinating for many foodies. On the Historiska recept.fi platform, each recipe is presented in facsimile, as a readable text and as a transcription. In addition, there is a table of the historical measurements and what they correspond to in our time. In most cases the recipes must be modified to some extent. In this original recipe, parsley and sage are deep-fried in butter, but nowadays it is easier to deep-fry in oil. (Photo by Yrsa Lindqvist, Helsinki 2023)



Fig. 2. Root vegetables, such as carrots and turnips were often stuffed and thus became something beyond a carrot or turnip. Even so, they were often stuffed with the same insides that were dug out, and mixed with almonds and cream, for example. In the recipe for stuffed carrots, a funnel is used to extract the inside of the vegetable, but in the cooking classes, other methods, that serve the same purpose, may be resorted to. (Photo by Yrsa Lindqvist, Loimaa, 2023)



Fig. 3. During the actual cooking, the discussions are usually about how to solve various challenges that arise as the recipes are not so precise. Each course ends with a session of eating together and tasting all of the dishes served. The participants then often also reflect on the period that the recipes of the dishes refers to, on what it was like to live at that time, on the women's burden with housework in a time without electricity, household appliances, and several other issues. (Photo by Yrsa Lindqvist, Helsinki, 2023)

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PART IV:

GENDER, IDENTITY,
'INVENTION' AND FOOD
HERITAGE



OLGA ORLIĆ

FOODWAYS, IDENTITY AND SELECTIVE TRADITION IN ŽRNOVO: REPRESENTATIVE AND FORBIDDEN FOOD

ABSTRACT

In this paper I will analyse two directions in which *selective tradition* operates in the case of Žrnovo foodways. The first refers to *makaruni*, a special type of pasta that over time became a representative heritage food for Žrnovo, Korčula Island, Croatia, and a strong marker of its identity. The second direction follows the developments around a once typical, but a now forbidden Žrnovo food.

INTRODUCTION: AMBIGUITY OF FOOD HERITAGE AT A GLANCE

During last year's (2024) conference dedicated to the Žrnovo-born famous writer, Petar Šegedin, I had the chance to participate in a special conference programme organised in his birth place.¹ Part of the programme consisted of a performance organised by pupils and teachers from Žrnovo elementary school. Among other things, the pupils staged an imaginary *Talent Show* with a jury consisting of two girls, while several other pupils exhibited their various talents in front of the jury and an audience. Some were praised for their performance while others were 'sent home'. At the very end of the programme, a pupil with a hat, a small flat stone brick, and a small wooden stick, appeared. One of the jurors asked: "What is your talent, Peter²?" And Peter replied that he is the last inhabitant of Žrnovo who knows how to install stone-crush traps. The audience, made up mostly of locals, broke into laughter after this statement. Then, while the audience still laughed, the boy started to install the

1 Reference to this study: Olga Orlić: Foodways, Identity and Selective Tradition in Žrnovo: Representative and Forbidden Food. In Anikó Bádi and Patricia Lysaght (eds.): *Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage*. Budapest: ELTE RCH Institute of Ethnology – Museum of Ethnography, 2025. pp. 267–281.

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2 A pseudonym is used here.

stone-crush trap on the podium, and the jury members seemed to be very upset, stating:

Oh my God! We have to report this to the Animal Protection Society! Audience, please do not take any photos! Peter, please, go home...

Peter seemed confused, as if he did not understand why he was at fault, and replied:

But, why? If you only knew how tasteful this is with *makaruni*.

The audience continued to laugh and even applauded. The show ended as Peter walked down the podium steps, after having been dismissed by the jury for referring to now forbidden practice of bird hunting by using stone-crush traps. Despite the fact that a blackbird was not explicitly mentioned, the meal he was referring to was *makaruni na kosiće*³ (pasta [a type called locally *makaruni*] with blackbird meat). And while the *makaruni* (usually prepared with beef) became a symbol of Žrnovo and their foodways, *kos*, 'blackbird', is a protected species in Croatia since 2013, similar to some other wild species that used to be consumed in various Croatian regions.⁴

Sani Sardelić has described this particular type of trap as follows:

This method of hunting is, of course, prohibited by law today, but they remember the method of hunting and know the procedure, even the younger informants. The procedure is quite simple and very efficient. You need one big and one small stone slab, a 'tile', two or three twigs, and a small trough with water.⁵

Her research revealed that even the mentioning of the meal, *makaruni na kosiće*, for the people of Žrnovo, evokes 'exciting memories'.

FOOD AND IDENTITY: NEIGHBOURS AND FRIENDS ON KORČULA ISLAND

Anthropologist Cristina Grasseni, in her work on alternative food networks in Italy, analysed food as a total social phenomenon,⁶ according to Marcel Mauss's definition

3 Sardelić, Sani: 'Tradicijska kultura Mediterana – proučavanje i prezentacija' ('Traditional Culture of the Mediterranean – Study and Presentation'), *Etnološka istraživanja* 17 (2012), 87–105.

4 Rittig-Beljak, Nives: 'Puh – od ulova do regionalnog specijaliteta' ('The dormouse – from catching it towards creating regional identity'), *Studia ethnologica Croatica* 10/11, no. 1 (1999), 111–124.

5 Sardelić: 'Tradicijska kultura Mediterana – proučavanje i prezentacija', 87–105.

6 Grasseni, Cristina: *Beyond Alternative Food Networks* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

of the term,⁷ i.e. as a social fact that integrates seemingly unrelated aspects of everyday life: family, economic, legal, religious, moral and aesthetic aspects, and manifests itself as a totality in the individual experience. Research confirms the existence of a strong link between food and national,⁸ regional,⁹ and local identity. Barnhill, Budolfson, and Doggett, rightfully emphasise that “Food practices and customs are one way in which we construct personal identities and group identities, and they are a powerful way to communicate our identities to others.”¹⁰

Foodways, defined as patterns “determining what we eat, as well as how and why and under what circumstances”, play the same role in identification processes.¹¹ On the other hand, what we do not eat (and why) can be perceived either as food avoidance or even as food taboo. Marianne Elisabeth Lien argues that, “Because food is such a powerful medium for expressing group identity and social differentiation, the explicit avoidance of particular foods is an effective means to establish boundaries between self and other.”¹² Food taboos or avoidances or food preferences can, therefore, be an important driver of auto- and hetero-stereotypisation,¹³ playing an important role in identification processes. Identities, being flexible, contextual and situational,¹⁴ are usually constructed around the features that communities themselves ‘decide’ should be distinctive,¹⁵ and that are created in interaction with the Other.¹⁶ One approach to ‘deciding’ what is distinctive involves, what Raymond Williams has termed the ‘selective tradition’, a process connecting lived culture and

7 Mauss, Marcel: *The Gift. Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (London: Cohen and West, 1966 [1925]).

8 Guptill, Amy E. – Copelton, Denise A. and Lucal, Betsy: *Food and Society: Principles and Paradoxes* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013).

9 Orlić, Ivona: ‘Tradicionalna prehrana i turistička ponuda Istre: obilježja istarskoga regionalnog identiteta’ (‘Traditional food and tourist offer of Istria: characteristics of Istrian regional identity’), *Etnološka istraživanja* 10 (2005), 63–76.

10 Barnhill, Anne – Budolfson, Mark and Doggett, Tyler: *Food, Ethics and Society. An Introductory Text with Readings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 226.

11 Edge, John T. ed.: *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture: Volume 7: Foodways* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 8.

12 Lien, Marianne Elisabeth: ‘Dogs, Whales and Kangaroos: Transnational Activism and Food Taboos’, in Lien, Marianne Elisabeth and Nerlich, Brigitte eds.: *The Politics of Food* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2004), 180.

13 Lien: ‘Dogs, Whales and Kangaroos: Transnational Activism and Food Taboos’, 180–181.

14 Hall, Stuart: ‘Introduction: Who Needs Identity?’, in Hall, Stuart and du Gay, Paul eds.: *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London: Sage, 1996), 1–17.

15 Barth, Frederik: *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. The Social Organization of Cultural Difference* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget – Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969).

16 Berger, Peter L. and Luckmann, Thomas: *Socijalna konstrukcija zbilje* (‘The Social Construction of Reality’) (Zagreb: Naprijed, 1992).

the past.¹⁷ According to his understanding of the process involved, each generation decides what its traditions are or will become. Laurajane Smith described a similar approach when analysing heritagisation processes. According to her conclusions, discursive practices are crucial in the creation of what becomes the *authorised heritage discourse*, and what does not.¹⁸ The same can happen to food that is increasingly perceived as being cultural heritage (and becoming a sought-after commodity), usually “in the name of its ‘typicity’”.¹⁹ According to Cristina Grasseni, “Typical foods are not just ‘traditional’ but are bearers of the historical know-how that would flourish in that particular locality.”²⁰

But what happens when an interruption, in form of a legal act, intervenes in these processes and puts environmental concerns ahead of local traditions, with the result that such traditions cannot be considered representative heritage food? Jelena Ivanišević has discussed the situation which arose when European Union (EU) legislation imposed certain restrictions (due to food safety concerns) on the selling of cottage cheese and sour cream (Croatian: *sir i vrhnje*), a dairy product typical of northwestern Croatia and an important part of the Zagreb farmers’ market identity. *Sir i vrhnje* became the symbol of fears that European Integration – raised by one Eurosceptic political party prior to the accession of Croatia to the EU in 2013) – would eventually destroy ‘our’ traditional way of producing and selling food.²¹

While the women selling cottage cheese and sour cream had to adapt to the new EU regulations in order to be able to continue selling their products, the same mechanism could not be applied in the case of *makaruni na kosiće*. Regarding the ban on hunting migratory birds (and other protected species, including dormice and frogs), imposed by the regulation: ‘Pravilnik o strogo zaštićenim vrstama (NN 144/13)’ (‘Rulebook on Strictly Protected Species, The Official Gazette of the Republic of Croatia, 144/13’),²² contemporary environmental care took priority over hunting for

17 Williams, Raymond: *The Long Revolution* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1961), 57–88.

18 Smith, Laurajane: *Uses of Heritage* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2006).

19 Grasseni, Cristina: ‘Of Cheese and Ecomuseums: Food as Cultural Heritage in the Northern Italian Alps’, in Brulotte, Ronda and Di Giovine, Michael A. eds.: *Edible Identities: Food as Cultural Heritage* (Farnham, Surrey, UK – Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Group, 2014), 55–66.

20 Grasseni: ‘Of Cheese and Ecomuseums: Food as Cultural Heritage in the Northern Italian Alps’, 55.

21 Ivanišević, Jelena: ‘Sir, vrnje, tradicija i politika’ (‘Cottage cheese and sour cream, tradition and politics’), in Rittig-Beljak, Nives and Belaj, Melanija eds.: *Turist kao gost – prilozi kulinarskom turizmu* (Zagreb: Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku, 2009), 65–72.

22 *Pravilnik o strogo zaštićenim vrstama, Narodne novine 144* (2013) (‘Rulebook on Strictly Protected Species, The Official Gazette of the Republic of Croatia, 144 [2013]’). <https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2013_12_144_3086.html> accessed 28 April 2025.

subsistence, and, as there were no options for adaptation available, as in case of the selling of *sir i vrhnje*, this practice had to be abandoned, or go underground.

FOODWAYS AND IDENTITIES IN ŽRNOVO

Korčula is the sixth largest Croatian Island by size, located in the southeastern part of the Adriatic Sea, next to the Pelješac peninsula. According to the last Census of population held in 2021,²³ the Island has 14,594 inhabitants – representing a slight decline in population in the last 10 years, as according to the 2011 Census, there were 15,524 persons on the Island at that time.²⁴ Today, the Island has five municipalities, including Korčula town, with nine major settlements, and it is an important tourist destination in Dalmatia.

Local identifications on the seemingly culturally undifferentiated Island were/are strongly expressed, revealing, not only previous mutual relations between those nine settlements, but especially antagonistic ones.²⁵ The most common basis for stereotypisation is language,²⁶ traditions, and customs (including those related to food), and perceptions about the mentality of the Other. Similar to other parts of Croatia,²⁷ the inhabitants of Korčula's settlements use nicknames – usually of a mocking character – for each other. These ethnophaulisms, as Abraham Aaron Roback²⁸ called them, represent stereotypes compressed into just one word. *Žrnovci*

23 *Popis stanovništva, kućanstava i stanova u Republici Hrvatskoj 2021* ('The Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in the Republic of Croatia 2021') (Zagreb: Državni zavod za statistiku [Croatian Bureau of Statistics], 2021).

24 *Popis stanovništva, kućanstava i stanova u Republici Hrvatskoj 2021* ('The Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in the Republic of Croatia 2021') (Zagreb: Državni zavod za statistiku [Croatian Bureau of Statistics], 2021).

25 Orlić, Olga: *Identifikacijski procesi na otoku Korčuli* ('Identification processes on the island of Korčula'), Ph.D. thesis, unpublished (Zagreb: Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences University of Zagreb, 2011).

26 Joseph, John. E.: *Language and Identity* (Palgrave: Macmillan, 2004).

27 Perinić Lewis, Ana: *Otoci otoka Hvara. Pluralizam lokalnih otočnih identifikacija* ('Islands of the Island of Hvar. The Pluralism of Local Island Identifications') (Zagreb: Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada, 2017); Blagonić, Sandi: *Od Vlaha do Hrvata: Austrijsko-mletačka politička dihotomija i etnodiferencijski procesi u Istri* ('From Vlachs to Croats: The Austrian-Venetian political dichotomy and ethno-differentiation processes in Istria') (Zagreb: Jesenski and Turk, 2013).

28 Roback, Abraham Aaron: *A Dictionary of International Slurs (Ethnophaulisms); With a Supplementary Essay on Aspects of Ethnic Prejudice* (Cambridge, MA: Sci-Art Publishers, c. 1944).

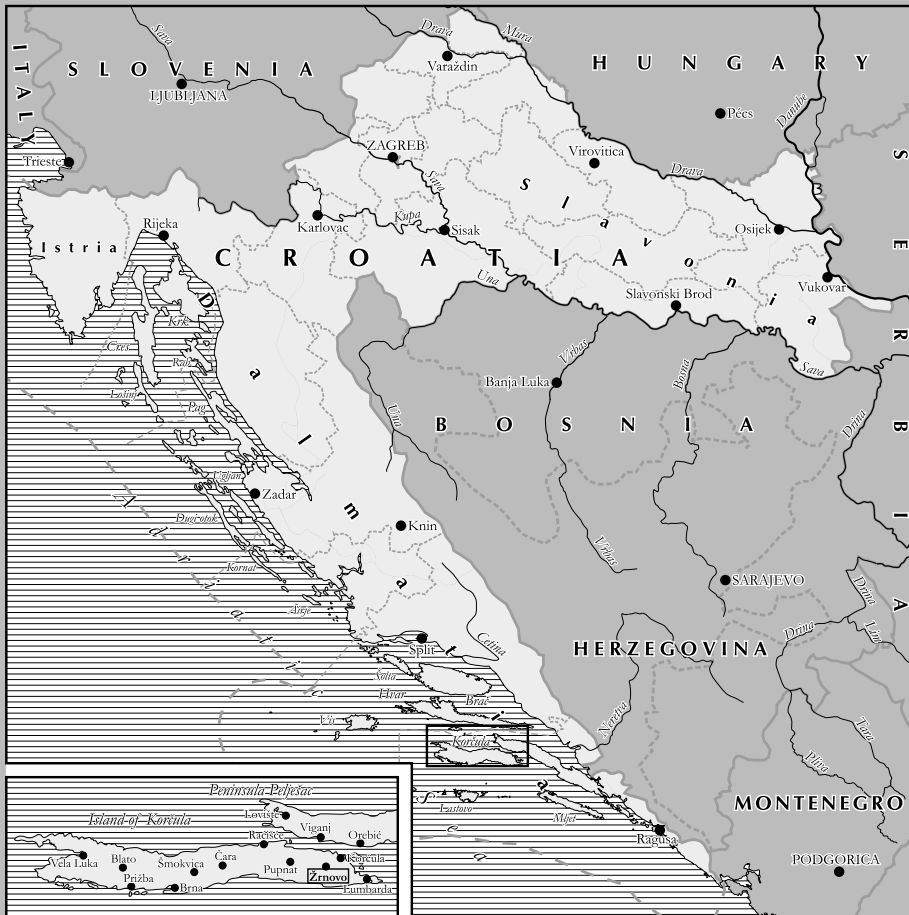


Fig. 1. Location of Korčula Island in the Adriatic Sea²⁹ and location of Žrnovo on Korčula Island³⁰. Map by Béla Nagy

– the inhabitants of Žrnovo – have two nicknames. The first, *vilani* ('villagers', 'peasants') was not exclusive to them. Citizens of Korčula town in the east of the Island, once the only urban settlement there, and also sharing the name of the Island itself, used to call all other inhabitants *vilani*, emphasising the urban-rural dichotomy between 'us' and 'them'. The nickname remained for Žrnovci, inhabiting the very next village to the town. However, Žrnovci were also called *Kuneji* (a local expression meaning 'rabbits'). This nickname probably alluded to the people's habit of eating a lot of vegetables, and was, most likely, applied to them by the citizens of Korčula town, where perceptions of rural food as being simpler and poorer (such as eating vegetables) no doubt existed.³¹ However, eating vegetables – in this case eating local types of cabbage – called *raštika* or *zeje* in the local dialect – is a common feature of Dalmatian cuisine, or even of a broader area, as Medina puts it, when writing about the Mediterranean diet.³² However, another type of food, one that was not prepared so often, became, in the end, the most representative, and the heritage food of Žrnovo. This is *žrnovski makaruni* with the eponymic adjective '*žrnovski*' in its name. This food became a strong marker of Žrnovo identity, one recognised by outsiders, including tourists.

During my first research visit to Korčula Island in 2007, I remember Sani Sardelić, a curator from Korčula Town Museum, who wrote extensively on various food practices on the island,³³ mentioning efforts around organising the first public display of Žrnovo women preparing *makaruni*. Her diligent efforts, together with other women from Žrnovo, seem to have succeeded, because when I returned to the Island in 2024, I found out that 'Makarunada' (a festival of *makaruni*) had been organised there for the previous fifteen years by women involved in the Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) *Žrnovski makaruni*. They prepare and sell

29 <<http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/croatia.pdf>> (modified by Olga Orlić), map by Béla Nagy.

30 <<http://korcula.net/naselja/kormap3.gif>> (modified by Olga Orlić), map by Béla Nagy.

31 Domingos, Nuno – Sobral, José Manuel and West, Harry: 'Introduction: Approaching Food and Foodways between the Country and the City through the Work of Raymond Williams', in Domingos, Nuno – Sobral, José Manuel and West, Harry eds.: *Food between the Country and the City. Ethnographies of a Changing Global Foodscape* (London – New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 1–17.

32 Medina, F. Xavier: 'Mediterranean Diet: From Health to Sustainability through Culture, or on Cultural Models Interpreted from the Urgency of the Present Moment' (Comment in Discussion section of *Etnološka tribina*), in Ivanišević, Jelena – Tominc, Ana – Moro, Elisabetta – Albala, Ken – Medina, F. Xavier and Babić, Darko: 'Mediterranean Diet 3.0 – From Traditional Food to Sustainable Policies', *Etnološka tribina* 53/46, (2023), 55–59.

33 Sardelić, Sani: 'Wild Edible Herbs – Mišanca, Gruda, Parapač...', *Ethnological Researches* 12/13 (2008), 393–396; Sardelić: 'Traditional Culture of the Mediterranean – Study and Presentation', 87–105.

makaruni for various humanitarian purposes, such as the beautification of the village, for the church, or for the League against Cancer. However, the selling of *makaruni* to restaurants also provided important additional income for many women from Žrnovo (including newcomers from Far East countries). Making *makaruni* became an important economic tool for the community, and I recall the sense of pride I felt when joining Sani Sardelić (at her invitation) and other women preparing *makaruni* in a local school gym, for yet another humanitarian activity due to take place on the following days. In other words – from being a local food prepared only occasionally (and on very special occasions),³⁴ *žrnovski makaruni* became *typical* Žrnovo food, and Žrnovo representative heritage food. The process of selective tradition, in this case, was fuelled by tourism and touristic tastes that quite often dictate the adaptation of local food to new purposes,³⁵ but the efforts of local enthusiasts who recognised its potential has to be acknowledged as well.

However, when it comes to meat, that which is usually prepared with *makaruni* is beef, and that was certainly done for all festive or important occasions. Meat was not consumed frequently within the traditional cuisine of rural areas in Korčula Island, but only on special occasions – for many people it was not on the menu even on Sundays.³⁶ Meat was scarce and one would not regularly slaughter domestic animals for household meat provision. This fact was surely partially compensated for by hunting small birds and dormice.

Not all *Žrnovci* mentioned this tradition to me, but this is quite reasonable because I am an outsider. During my research in 2024, however, while talking with one particular gourmand (living on the Island, but not originating there) about meat-eating habits on the Island, he pointed to Žrnovo and said: “Yes, the meat was, for them up [meaning on the hill, where Žrnovo is located], these blackbirds.” He explained, in a jocular way, the taste *Žrnovci* had for avian fauna: “Aviation. That was it.” His wife added: “Today it is forbidden.”

34 Sardelić: ‘Traditional Culture of the Mediterranean – Study and Presentation’, 87–105.

35 Orlić, Ivona: ‘Tradicijska kultura prehrane kao turistička atrakcija: branje voća i samoniklog bilja u Istri’ (‘Traditional culture of food as a tourist attraction: picking fruit and wild herbs in Istria’), in Rittig-Beljak, Nives and Belaj, Melanija eds.: *Turist kao gost – prilozi kulinarskom turizmu* (Zagreb: Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku, 2009), 7–20; Kocković Zaborski, Tanja: ‘Turizam pamćenja i tradicijska prehrana. Okusi i vještine pripremanja jela u istarskim agroturizmima’ (‘Memory tourism and traditional food. Flavours and cooking skills in Istrian agrotourism’), *Etnološka tribina* 47/ 40 (2017), 127–140.

36 Orlić, Ivona: *Istra kroz tri generacije. Između svakodnevne konstrukcije identiteta i turističkog proizvoda* (‘Istria through three generations. Between everyday construction of identity and tourist product’) (Pazin: Etnografski muzej Istre – Museo etnografico dell’Istria, 2013).



Fig. 2. Making žrnovski makaruni. (Photo by Sani Sardelić)³⁷



Fig. 3. Žrnovski makaruni with beef. (Photo by Sani Sardelić)

However, one older member of the community did not hesitate to admit that he used to kill them (small birds) ‘a billion’ by using a stone-crush trap. He clearly labelled this practice a traditional one, passed from generation to generation: “We have traps that my grandfather placed in the woods, and then my father did so, and then I did, also. And now my grandchildren will do it.” He added that each household had its own traps and that no one would ever steal from another house’s trap.

The way he talked about bird-hunting using the stone-crush trap made me wonder if the practice was still alive. I got confirmation on this, together with an explanation about how this activity cannot be compared, in intensity, to bird-hunting of past times. Since blackbirds were caught by using water as a bait, the interlocutor added that, nowadays, they use a piece of a plastic bottle and pour water into it, while once they used to create a trough in the stone (*Žrnovci* were famous for stone carving). He also mentioned that, nowadays, stones from the rooftops of abandoned old stone houses and stables (many of which still exist) are used, and that this also makes the hunt easier. He concluded that blackbird [meat] is good prepared in every way.

Migratory-bird hunting for food and sport has ancient roots in Europe, including in the Mediterranean Basin, where it can be perceived *as longue durée*, i.e. as a “legacy of people-wildlife interactions within a very specific set of historical-ecological conditions”.³⁸ Therefore, Falzon argues that wild foods and “in particular migratory birds thus came to represent a means of topping up marginal agricultural production, and became an essential strand in the fabric of local communities”, especially on the islands.³⁹

In terms of the morality of hunting, Fisher et al. also stresses, that “it implied that the morality of hunting was predominantly judged by the hunter’s intentions, rather than by the outcome of the hunting act”,⁴⁰ thereby marking the difference between hunters for sport and recreation, and traditional hunters that once used to hunt for

37 Figs. 2–5, photographed by Sani Sardelić, Senior Curator at Korčula Town Museum, are used here with her permission.

38 Falzon, Mark-Anthony: ‘Flights of passion. Hunting, ecology and politics in Malta and the Mediterranean’, *Anthropology Today* 24/1 (2008) 15–20; Barca, Benjamin – Lindon, Adrien and Root-Bernstein, Meredith: ‘Environmentalism in the crosshairs: Perspectives on migratory bird hunting and poaching conflicts in Italy’, *Global Ecology and Conservation* 6 (2016), 189–207.

39 Falzon: ‘Flights of passion. Hunting, ecology and politics in Malta and the Mediterranean’, 20.

40 Fischer, Anke – Kerezi, Vesna – Arroyo, Beatriz – Mateos-Delibes, Miguel – Tadie, Degu – Lowassa, Asanterabi – Krangef, Olve and Skogenf, Ketil: ‘(De)legitimising hunting – Discourses over the morality of hunting in Europe and Eastern Africa’, *Land Use Policy* 32 (2013), 261–270.



Fig. 4. Stone-crush trap. (Photo by Sani Sardelić)



Fig. 5. Stone-crush trap on Korčula Island. (Photo by Sani Sardelić)

subsistence, and because of that, that they had developed different attitudes toward nature and animals, compared to poachers and those involved in illegal markets.

The delicate and/or controversial topic of hunting protected animals (formerly for subsistence), as a type of 'cultural food', requires further research. Authors, especially anthropologists, have been dealing with 'cultural food' and related practices, especially in relation to environmental concerns for protected species (e.g. Lien,⁴¹ Holtzman⁴²). But anthropologists do not waive penalties. However, lawyers dealing with the topic of 'cultural food' within a legal framework have rightfully noted that there are many layers related to the "right to eat culturally appropriate food". Maria Clara Maffei⁴³ emphasised that there are many controversies related to food choices and a choice protected by law, i.e. a right. By analysing international documents related to the protection of cultural diversity as a human right, some of them directly encompassing food and culinary practices, Maffei concluded that some types of food can be treated, even according to EU legislation, as 'cultural food'. She revealed numerous inconsistencies, or a form of vagueness, existing in documents that she had analysed, that make it challenging to unambiguously protect the right to cultural diversity (especially a food related one) as a human right, particularly in relation to some other rights, i.e. those of animals. She points to the 'reasonableness criterion' as being applicable, but stresses further:

Unfortunately, [...] this criterion is neither objective nor 'certain'. The positive aspect is that reasonableness evolves in the course of time and can be influenced by new emerging values, for instance greater consideration for animals and their protection against brutality.⁴⁴

The performance described at the beginning of this paper revealed how the people of Žrnovo today represent their own foodways, consisting of both representative and forbidden foods, in an auto-reflexive and auto-ironic way, playing both humorously and critically with their own food heritage. Whether the practice of hunting blackbirds (and other protected animals, in Žrnovo and elsewhere in Croatia where these animals were once legally on the menu) will be totally abandoned, or

41 Lien: 'Dogs, Whales and Kangaroos; Transnational Activism and Food Taboos', 2004.

42 Holtzman, Jon: 'On Whale: Conundrums of Culture and Cetaceans as Local Meat', *Ethnos* 82/2 (2017), 277–297.

43 Maffei, Maria Clara: 'Food as a Cultural Choice: A Human Right to Be Protected?', in Borelli Silvia and Lenzerini, Federico eds.: *Cultural Heritage, Cultural Rights, Cultural Diversity. New Developments in International Law* (Leiden – Boston, MA: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2012), 83–106.

44 Maffei, 'Food as a Cultural Choice: A Human Right to Be Protected?', 99.

whether it will go/stay underground, or gain the status of 'cultural food' and, therefore, be allowed to proceed in certain contexts or situations, is as yet uncertain. And the answer to this question will definitively depend on evolutions that will take place, not only within a legal framework, but also within traditions themselves.

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LEVENTE SZILÁGYI

STRUDLI: IDENTITY, ETHNICITY AND REPRESENTATION AMONG THE SWABIANS OF SZATMÁR

ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of *strudli*, a traditional Swabian dish, in the ethnic revitalisation of Szatmár's Swabian community in Romania and Hungary after the political transition of these countries from communism to multi-party democracies in 1989. Once suppressed from 1947 to 1989 during the communist era in both of the countries, German heritage became a key element of cultural revival for the Swabian community in the post transition period. This community, once nearly invisible, transformed itself into a national minority asserting its identity, while also forming a strong internal network. And in this process, *strudli* took on a prominent role.

INTRODUCTION

In my study,¹ I aim to examine the role of the *strudli*,² an iconic dish of Swabian cuisine, in the ethnic revitalisation of the Swabian communities of the Szatmár (Satu Mare) region in Romania and Hungary, following the political transition of these countries from communism to multi-party democracies in 1989.³ During the communist era, German ancestry was often suppressed out of political necessity; after the transition, however, it became a starting point for heritage processes then

1 Reference to this study: Levente Szilágyi: *Strudli: Identity, ethnicity and representation among the Swabians of Szatmár*. In Anikó Bádi and Patricia Lysaght (eds.): *Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage*. Budapest: ELTE RCH Institute of Ethnology – Museum of Ethnography, 2025. pp. 283–295.

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2 The word is very similar to the German 'Strudel', but it refers to a completely different dish. *Strudli* is not 'Strudel'.

3 The study was funded by project: FK 143759: 'Economy and Ethnicity. Agricultural Associations as Factors of Social and Economic Resilience in Swabian Villages in Satu Mare Region from the Regime Change to the Present.'

gaining momentum. Shortly after regime change in Romania and Hungary, the previously nearly-invisible Swabian group in the Szatmár region transformed itself into a national minority capable of asserting its interests, while simultaneously developing into a virtual community with strong internal cohesion. The question of preserving the cultural heritage of the Szatmár Swabians and of supporting Swabian traditions, is not only a demand of the Swabian community itself; it has also been a central issue for both the Hungarian and Romanian regional political elites. This interest is motivated, in no small part, by the hope of access to German investment channels available through the Swabian community.

ABOUT THE SWABIANS OF SZATMÁR

The Szatmár Swabians are named after Szatmár County. The ethnically diverse Szatmár County, inhabited by Hungarians, Romanians, Germans, Jews, Rusyns, Roma, and Slovaks, was part of the Kingdom of Hungary until the border changes following the end of World War I, after which the larger part of the county, including the vast majority of the Szatmár Swabians, became part of Romania as one of its north-western counties. Over the course of the 18th and 19th centuries, the county's wealthiest family, the Károlyis, settled primarily Catholic Germans on their estates. These German settlers came from Bavaria, Baden, and Hohenzollern, but the majority came from the Upper Swabian region of Württemberg (Oberschwaben).⁴

In Hungary, before World War I, the Szatmár Swabians were among the minority communities most assimilated into Hungarian culture.⁵ Lacking a significant intellectual or bourgeois class, the Szatmár Swabians struggled as a community to resist Hungarian assimilationist pressures. They settled in 31 villages scattered throughout Szatmár (Satu Mare) County, forming clusters in some areas and isolated communities in others, on both sides of the Hungarian-Romanian linguistic border.

4 Vonház, István: *A Szatmár megyei sváb telepítés* ('The Settlement of Swabians in Szatmár County') (Pécs: 1931), 176.

5 Sárándi, Tamás: 'Kísérlet a szatmári svábok visszanevelésére a két világháború között' ('An Attempt to Re-Germanise the Swabians of Szatmár between the Two World Wars'), in Nagy, István and Kutnyánszky, Bacska, Eszter eds.: *Bonyhádi evangélikus füzetek 2. Németek a Kárpát-medencében konferencia anyaga* ('Bonyhád Lutheran Booklets 2: Proceedings of the Conference "Germans in the Carpathian Basin"') (Bonyhád: Bonyhádi Petőfi Sándor Evangélikus Gimnázium, 2009), 302.

In predominantly Hungarian regions, the Swabians began shifting to the Hungarian language in the latter half of the 19th century, while in Romanian-majority areas, the use of German generally persisted until the early 1990s, when large-scale emigration to Germany from these areas occurred. After this exodus, compact Swabian communities remained only in the region surrounding Nagykároly (Carei) in present-day Romania. The findings of this presentation are, therefore, limited to this cluster. In the Nagykároly (Carei) area, there are 13 Swabian-inhabited villages, two of which are in Hungary, while the remainder are in Romania.

After World War II, the Swabians, also, faced numerous reprisals and, under the principle of collective guilt, a significant portion of the Szatmár Swabian population in Romania, as well as in Hungary, was deported to the Soviet Union for forced labour, resulting in considerable loss of life. Many did not survive the five- to six-year-long captivity. The humiliations endured, the inhumane conditions, the struggle for survival, and the resilience shown by the deportees, became central elements in local history among the Swabians. To this day, the memory of deportation is a core narrative in the self-representation of the Szatmár Swabians.⁶ However, under communism, this narrative was suppressed and forbidden.

In the 1990s, political changes in Romania and Hungary unleashed a powerful release of stories about deportation from the hitherto enforced silence, and these accounts became foundational to the revitalised Swabian identity.⁷ New cultural and social initiatives emerged based on German identity: on the Romanian side, Swabian folk dance and music groups were established, brass bands were re-formed, and the first deportee gatherings were organised. At this time, the Swabian ethnic movement in both countries centred primarily on commemorative ceremonies related to deportation.

For a long period, the national border between Romania and Hungary nearly hermetically separated communities that had previously maintained very close

6 Szilágyi, Levente: 'A deportálások emlékezete és a múlt feldolgozásának alakzatai a szatmári sváboknál' ('The Memory of Deportations and the Forms of Coming to Terms with the Past among the Swabians of Szatmár'), in Eszter Csikós, Eszter – Kiss, Réka and Ö. Kovács, József eds.: *Váltóállítás: diktatúrák a vidéki Magyarországon 1945-ben* ('Switching Tracks: Dictatorships in Rural Hungary in 1945') (Budapest: MTA Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont – Nemzeti Emlékezet Bizottsága, 2017), 328.

7 Marinka, Melinda: '21. századi sváb ünnepek identitásörző jellege Szatmárban. Ünnepek, ünnepekörök történelmi és néprajzi vonatkozásai' ('The Identity-Preserving Nature of 21st-Century Swabian Festivals in Szatmár: Historical and Ethnographic Aspects of Festivals and Festive Cycles'), *Studia Folkloristica et Ethnographica* (2013), 53.

social and economic ties.⁸ This division later led to different practices of ethnic revitalisation on either side of the border. While in Romanian communities, commemorative practices associated with deportation dominated Swabian identity representation, Hungarian communities emphasised heritage and festivity, particularly through events like the 'Strudli Festival'. These two ethnic revitalisation paths intersected frequently, as increasingly formalised connections brought the two communities closer after the political transition, thereby creating cross-border influences. The organisation of commemorative ceremonies in Hungarian villages like Vállaj and Mérk was greatly aided by close ties with Swabian twin communities in Romania. The first Szatmár Swabian deportation memorial was erected in Kisdengeleg (Dindeştiu Mic), Romania,⁹ in 1992, while in Vállaj, Hungary, the first public celebration and memorial unveiling did not take place until 2006. Even in 2006, the mayor of Vállaj, who organised the commemorations, felt that it took significant courage to bring the memory of deportations into the public space.

M: – And actually, it was in 2006 that the breakthrough happened, when a bit of spirit was needed for someone to stand up and talk about the 'malenkij robot' – the forced labour of Hungarians and Germans in the Soviet Union – in front of a microphone. Because until then, this topic was indeed very taboo.

I: – Even until 2006?

M: – Yes, even until 2006. That's why I say there was a little movement in '06, but even then, people looked around when I was standing at the microphone.

I: – But why?

M: – Well, you see, this persecution had a significant impact on us; it was very much dependent on the community, but generally, about twenty to twenty-five per cent of people never returned at that time. So it left a really deep mark. There's hardly a house, hardly a family, that hasn't been affected. So, a grandfather, a cousin, a brother-in-law, a friend – everyone had someone who was affected (Translation by the author).

8 Szilágyi, Levente: 'Párválasztási preferenciák a magyar–román határ által elválasztott két sváb településen, Csanáloson és Vállajon az 1825-től 1944-ig terjedő időszakban' ('Marriage Preferences in Two Swabian Villages Separated by the Hungarian-Romanian Border, Csanálos and Vállaj, from 1825 to 1944'), in Ispán, Ágota Lidia and Magyar, Zoltán eds.: *Ethno-lore XXXI. A Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont Néprajztudományi Intézetének Évkönyve (Ethno-lore XXXI. Yearbook of the Institute of Ethnology, Research Centre for the Humanities, Hungarian Academy of Sciences)*, (Budapest: MTA BTK Néprajztudományi Intézet, 2014), 123–144.

9 Marinka: '21. századi sváb ünnepek identitásörző jellege Szatmárban. Ünnepek, ünnepkörök történelmi és néprajzi vonatkozásai', 153.

Memory studies define society as a community of memory.¹⁰ According to Jan Assmann, individuals acquire memories through socialisation and communication processes,¹¹ which ultimately makes them members of a community. In this sense, the Szatmár Swabians in either country cannot initially be regarded as a memory community, as the silence driven by fear and anxiety hindered direct intergenerational transmission of biographical narratives.¹² After the political transition, however, they became a community capable of advocating for its interests. Stories of deportation emerged almost explosively, once freed from the perceived and real pressures of the communist political regimes, becoming one of the core structures of the re-emerging Swabian identity.

The commemorations that began in Vállaj, Hungary, in 2006 marked a conspicuous start to the domestication of history; the deportation memorial in the memorial park was followed by other statues and monuments. Today, in the memorial park near the church in Vállaj, there are five monuments or statues, four of which honour Swabian identity: the settlement memorial, a bust of Gyula Láng (the church's builder), the deportation memorial, and a model of the *Ulmer Schachtel*.¹³ The fifth commemorates Sándor Becsky, who played a key role in ensuring that Vállaj and Mérk remained within Hungary when the Treaty of Trianon (1920) defined new borders.¹⁴

As the number of commemorative ceremonies increased and the number of deportees declined, knowledge of the deportation transitioned from *communicative memory* – essentially a *generational memory*¹⁵ – to collective memory. Memory requires specific locations, and this need is met by monuments, statues, and plaques.

10 Keszeg, Vilmos: 'Élettörténetek populáris regiszterekben' ('Life Stories in Popular Registers'), in Jakab Albert, Zsolt – Keszeg, Anna and Keszeg, Vilmos eds.: *'Emberek, életpályák történetek'* ('People, Life Paths, Stories') (Cluj-Napoca: BBTE Magyar Néprajz és Antropológia Tanszék – Kriza János Néprajzi Társaság, 2007), 184.

11 Jan, Assmann: *A kulturális emlékezet. Írás, emlékezés és politikai identitás a korai magaskultúrákban* ('Cultural Memory and Early Civilisation: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination') (Budapest: Atlantisz, 1999), 35–37.

12 Biographical narratives are stories in which those remembering recall certain phases and events of their life paths – in this case, the deportations.

13 The Ulm barge is a symbol of the Danube Swabian settlement and has also been included in the coat of arms of the Szatmár Swabians.

14 An important episode in the collective memory of Vállaj is the idea of the 'most loyal village', which suggests that Vállaj's affiliation with Hungary is attributed solely to the preparedness and cunning of the village leaders, primarily the notary Sándor Becsky.

15 Generational memory is historically tied to a group and fades away with its bearers. (Assmann: *A kulturális emlékezet. Írás, emlékezés és politikai identitás a korai magaskultúrákban* ('Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination'), 51.



Fig. 1. The Vállaj Memorial Park, Hungary. In the foreground, the model of the Ulmer Schachtel, with the Roman Catholic Church in the background. (Photo by Levente Szilágyi, 2024)

For the Swabian villages in both Romania and Hungary these places of memory¹⁶ are especially significant, as they represent, not merely a relocation of memory, but also primary symbols of Swabian history and identity. They serve not only as memory sites but also as monuments that bear witness to the community about past events, as well as to the production and display of memory, given that they are located in accessible public spaces and are regularly used symbolically.

I distinguish four different levels of remembrance regarding the deportations to the Soviet Union: individual memory, generational memory, communicative memory, and collective memory. Hungarian government-level rehabilitation of the Swabians and the official acknowledgment of the deportation narrative, took place in 2007, when the Speaker of the National Assembly formally apologised at a conference held in Parliament on the sixtieth anniversary of the deportations. On December 17, 2013, the National Assembly declared January 19 as the Day of Remembrance for the Deportation and Expulsion of Germans from Hungary, thereby commemorating the departure of the first train carrying German residents from Hungary to Germany on that day.

At deportee gatherings, *strudli* had only a 'supporting role' initially: during the commemorative ceremony, it was served alongside other refreshments at receptions for the participants. *Strudli* took center stage for the first time in Vállaj, in 2001, when the 'Strudli Festival' was held as part of the first wave of festival initiatives in Hungary. Since then, it has been held every year at Pentecost, evolving from a local event into a regional-scale festival. In recent years, the festival has become a two-day event with entry tickets, drawing thousands of visitors. Gradually, the festival has taken the place of traditional commemorative ceremonies as a space for identity representation. While deportee gatherings are primarily for those directly affected – deportees, their relatives, descendants, and (required) invited guests, including representatives of Swabian, German, Romanian, and Hungarian political and civil organisations – the festival aims to reach a much wider audience.

While the deportee gatherings serve as commemorative ceremonies that fulfill the internal need for community solidarity, the 'Strudli Festival' is a platform for identity expression and community presence for Swabian-origin groups. The former follows the choreography of ritual, while the latter follows the choreography of celebration.

16 Pierre, Nora: 'Emlékezet és történelem között. A helyek problematikája' ('Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire'), *Aetas* 10/3 (1999), 142–157; Assmann: *A kulturális emlékezet. Írás, emlékezés és politikai identitás a korai magaskultúrákban*, 40.



Fig. 2, 3. Posters of 'Strudli Festivals' in Vállaj, Hungary, 2009, 2019

Put starkly, as the number of former deportees decreased, the number of (non-Swabian) *strudli*-consumers grew in inverse proportion. *Strudli* has become the most widely-recognised symbol of Swabian identity and cultural heritage.

WHAT IS STRUDLI?

Although *strudli* plays an important role as a fasting dish in the religious meals of the Szatmár Swabians, it is not considered a holiday food. It is a simple, quickly-prepared dough-based dish, fried in abundant oil or fat and filled with potatoes, plum jam, or sometimes cottage cheese or whipped egg whites. Traditionally, *strudli* was made on Fridays as the main dish after returning from work in the fields. For home consumption, it was typically prepared with one kilogram of flour, yielding enough dough to form four 'leaves' – 22–24 pieces.

The ingredients for *strudli* include flour, sour milk, egg yolk, salt, a small amount of fat (or oil), and oil for frying. For the filling, traditionally-cooked plum jam (thinned with water for easier spreading), potatoes, cottage cheese, or whipped egg whites are used. The dough is made neither too hard nor too soft and it is not rested but rolled out, filled, and immediately fried in hot oil – previously in lard. For frying, a tall-sided metal pot made specially by local tinsmiths was used.

Those who make *strudli* always highlight its simplicity and quick preparation, often in the context of working in the fields:

We had cows, we had potatoes, they'd come home from the fields, and it was ready in no time. There was sour milk, and that was a main meal. If you know how to make the dough, it's done in no time. You really have to know the dough, though. It mustn't be too hard or too soft, because a lot depends on that (Woman from Vállaj; translation by the author).

'Why *strudli*?' Because Swabian women always had everything, they needed at home to make it. Almost every house had a cow, so there was sour cream, cottage cheese, flour, sunflower oil, or sometimes lard; they'd use oil for frying but mix the dough with lard. And then, it was done in no time (Woman from Mezőfény; translation by the author).

By six in the evening, they came home from work and had dinner by half past six. The first thing to do was always to peel the potatoes so they could cook. They'd knead the dough, make it, and it was done' (Man from Csanálos; translation by the author).



Fig. 4. A snapshot from a Csanálos 'Strudli Festival', Romania. (Photo by Levente Szilágyi, 2024)



A short film about
the 'Strudli Festival'.
Created by: Levente
Szilágyi

There are significant differences in the everyday *strudli*-baking practices of the Swabian communities on either side of the border. While in Romanian villages, making and consuming *strudli* is completely common and regular, in Hungarian villages it is more occasional. There are other differences as well between the *strudli* baked on either side of the border. In Romanian villages, they use a wider variety of fillings than in the Hungarian ones. Characteristics of Transylvanian cuisine have gradually been incorporated into this traditional Swabian dish, so that *strudli* filled with dill and cottage cheese is typical only on the eastern side of the border (Romania), mainly during festivals. The 'dessert' *strudli*, made with a filling of sweetened whipped egg whites, is not made at all in Hungary, nor is it found everywhere in Romanian villages either:

It was usually for the children or for the cook, whoever liked it. The egg whites are whipped into a foam, and then that foam – well-beaten egg whites with a bit of sugar and salt – is spread onto the dough just like jam. When it is baked, it rises to about 5–6 cm. The only thing is that you have to eat the *strudli* quickly, because it softens very fast. And then it's sweet (Woman from Mezőfény; translation by the author).

In the traditional dietary regime of the Swabians a 'byproduct' of making *strudli* was *strudli* soup, which was based on the cooking liquids and trimmings left over from making the *strudli*, combined with the indispensable roux and milk in Swabian cuisine:

The Swabians have always been clever, and when the housewife came home from the fields, she needed food quickly. So, when she rolled out the *strudli*, the water was already boiling...; they even did it so that they cooked the potatoes, took them out of the water, and then boiled the *strudli* in the potato-cooking water for the *strudli* soup. That way, there was a little leftover potato, and both were done in one go (Woman from Mezőfény; translation by the author).

STRUDLI AS A FESTIVAL FOOD

The success of the 'Strudli Festival' in Hungary has also influenced the Romanian villages. In Csanálos, for example, the village day celebration, organised as the new-bread harvest feast in 2022, has been renamed the 'Strudli Festival'. *Strudli* festivals are also organised in the county seat of Szatmárnémeti, and *strudli* baking-tents have appeared at the village days of other settlements as well. Today, these *strudli* festivals on either sides of the border are more than just gastronomic festivals; they

have become the most important events for ethnic self-representation and regional identity.

One significant reason why *strudli*, among many Swabian specialties, has ‘loaded’ itself with identity-carrying and representative content, is likely due to the fact that its preparation is relatively simple, easily mobilisable, and primarily, because it can be excellently marketed and sold, and it is inexpensive. With a bit of exaggeration, one might say that it is the ideal festival food.

Every Swabian settlement around Nagykároly on the both sides of the border has at least one *strudli* baking-team. These teams, typically consisting of 5 to 7 members – mostly women from the middle generation – participate in an increasing number of organised events, but they have many more members since not everyone can be present everywhere. The teams are, therefore, mainly composed of women, but not exclusively; the male members play important roles in transportation and in the preparation of the ingredients. Depending on the size of each event, 3 to 6 teams from different villages participate. The local municipalities pay a daily fee to the *strudli* makers, which, due to the large number of festivals, provides significant supplementary income from *strudli* baking. At larger festivals, it is common for male members to handle the kneading of the *strudli* dough, as they can prepare much larger quantities of dough for rolling out than the women can.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ‘HOMEMADE’ *STRUDLI* AND FESTIVAL *STRUDLI*

Although *strudli* made at home and at festivals is very similar, there are some differences, primarily as regards the ingredients used. At home – unlike how the festival *strudli* is made – the flour is typically sifted before use; lard instead of oil is used, and sour milk instead of yogurt; eggs are sourced from home rather than purchased from a store, and the jam used for filling is homemade, typically made from plums cooked in a cauldron, rather than store-bought plum jam.

SUMMARY

After a successful introduction, *strudli* soon took on a ‘life of its own,’ stepping out of the Swabian microcontext to become a regional product and a Swabian brand. It has also become a permanent feature of cultural events in the region, both Hungarian

and Romanian. Through national Hungarian and Romanian television cooking shows, a wide audience has come to know, not only the dish, but also the community that produces it.

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CSABA MÉSZÁROS

THE TASTE OF FAT

NOURISHING MORE THAN JUST THE BODY IN YAKUTIA

ABSTRACT

This paper relies on ethnographic research carried out in subarctic Yakutia in northeastern Siberia in order to explore why certain tastes are perceived differently in various communities. The proposed phenomenological approach highlights the importance of the material quality of fat as it is perceived in three Sakha village communities in Yakutia (Sakha Republic). This perception is rooted in ontological foundations that are significant not only in food culture but also in the broader context of Sakha adaptation in Northeastern Siberia, in the subarctic environment.

Anthropological¹ field notes and ethnographic vignettes often oscillate around the experience of eating, drinking, and common repasts in the field.² Sensing during fieldwork is not strictly limited to seeing (taking photos/creating images/making films) and hearing (recording sounds, music, and verbal representations) but also relies on tasting, smelling and somatic experiences.³ These experiences do not usually lend themselves easily to anthropological theorisation and to a conceptual grasp. Writing about tastes, smells, and odours can be easily discredited in anthropological scholarship as non-theoretical and ethnography-bound sheer

1 Reference to this study: Csaba Mészáros: The Taste of Fat. Nourishing More than just the Body in Yakutia. In Anikó Báti and Patricia Lysaght (eds.): *Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage*. Budapest: ELTE RCH Institute of Ethnology – Museum of Ethnography, 2025. pp. 297–309.

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2 Haines, Helen R.: 'A Rat by Any Other Name: Conflicting Definitions of "Dinner" in Belize, Central America', in Haines, Helen R. and Sammells, Clare A. eds.: *Adventures in Eating: Anthropological Experiences in Dining from Around the World* (Denver: University Press of Colorado, 2010), 43–58.

3 Laplante, Julie – Scobie, Willow and Gandsman, Ari: 'Introduction: Lines of Flight', in Laplante, Julie – Scobie, Willow and Gandsman, Ari eds.: *Search After Method: Sensing, Moving, and Imagining in Anthropological Fieldwork* (London: Berghahn Books, 2020), 1–18.

representations of memories and sensory experiences – in short, anecdotal sketches from the merry times of fieldwork.⁴

Capitalising on some of my fieldwork experiences from Yakutia in northeastern Siberia, I will argue in this article, that by immersing oneself in tastes and flavours, and by examining materials with properties stimulating the gustatory system, ethnographic descriptions of local communities are made more accurate and truer to the realities encountered in the field, including sitting at dinner tables, and that this approach ultimately enhances the quality of ethnographic accounts. That is, writing about tastes, tasting, and experiences of eating together with local community members adds to the integrity of anthropological representation. Thus, the evocations of joint events and common repasts are much more than just ethnographic vignettes from the field; they contribute to a better understanding and conceptualisation of the local lifeworlds of Sakha village communities.

Anthropology has relied heavily on the fieldworker's eyes and ears.⁵ Analysing texts and verbalised knowledge alongside observable practices and skills, has provided a detailed description of lifeworlds in anthropological writing. However, alterity presents itself not only in local practices, narrative constructions, knowledge, skills, and so on (as represented in field notes, recorded images, and sounds), but also in more volatile experiences, like in the taste and smell of food.⁶ While anthropologists do collect and record their experiences of being disgusted or delighted by a drink or a food during fieldwork, they can hardly (if at all) conceptualise these observations verbatim in their scholarly output.⁷ It is, of course, possible to vividly describe these experiences, but it is a challenge to translate them into academic abstractions.

At the same time, differences in taste or feelings of disgust towards certain foods (or materials) are clear indicators of anthropologists encountering radical alterity. The reluctance to taste (and enjoy) specific foods highlights the limitations of fully immersing oneself in local lifeworlds.

In this paper, I will discuss my experiences with eating fat in Yakutia and its significance within Sakha communities. This study explores how fat is perceived,

4 Stoller, Paul: *The Taste of Ethnographic Things. The Senses in Anthropology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986).

5 Okely, Judith: *Anthropological Practice: Fieldwork and the Ethnographic Method* (London/New York: Routledge, 2020).

6 Sutton, David E.: 'Food and the senses', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39 (2010), 209–223.

7 Durham, Deborah: 'Disgust and the Anthropological Imagination', *Ethnos* 76/2 (2011), 131–156.

emphasising its connections to life and sustainable farming for the Sakha people of Siberia. While food research in anthropology typically focuses on production and branding, I aim to broaden this perspective by including the relationships between various living beings and materials.

I will first address the challenges of food perception in anthropology, then introduce a phenomenological approach that allows the researcher's culturally-influenced perceptions to be set aside. This is crucial because taste is subjective; what one may find unappetising could still be considered delicious within a particular cultural context. It is important to recognise that the perception of fat and fatty foods is shaped by context, as no entity is encountered in isolation but rather within specific circumstances.

Next, I would like to explore the role of fat as a substance in the lifeworld of the Siberian Sakha people. Specifically, I aim to understand the material characteristics of fat, as well as how the locals perceive its colour, texture, taste, and nutritional value. Furthermore, I will develop my argument to emphasise the ontological significance of the material qualities of fat. My goal is to tackle the key issue – that the relationship between food and humans cannot be separated from the local lifeworld. In order to gain an understanding of this relationship, the connections between various living and non-living entities in the subarctic landscape requires examination.

TASTING FAT WITH FELLOW TABLEMATES

Before I examine the issues arising from the different perceptions of flavours – specifically the taste of various foods along with their associated smells, textures, and appearances – it is important to recount a few fieldwork experiences that highlighted a significant divide between my Sakha friends and me, in our interpretation of the enjoyment derived from a particular food. The first experience revolves around a soup made from the large sea duck called the velvet scoter, which we shared with my friend. The Sakha consider these birds to be exceptionally delicious, largely due to their high-fat content, which, for them, contributes to their unique enjoyment value. The way the Sakha people consume soup made from a fat and plump bird, differs from the practice with other game soups. As the velvet scooter simmers, a layer of fat rises to the top, which is ladled off into a separate bowl. When served, the soup is drunk from a mug, while the meat is dipped in the

fat in the bowl before it is eaten. Although I found the dish less appealing with the fat, Ystapaan insisted that the fat held the bird's flavour, and I obliged by dipping the meat in the fat out of courtesy.

A similar experience occurred with Sakha beef-tripe soup during my fieldwork in Tanda in 2002. Initially put off by its fat content, I eventually grew to appreciate the soup after a few months. Moving on to crucian carp soup, its enjoyment also hinges on its rich fat content, especially when made from fish caught in early winter. Smaller, fatter crucian carps which produce a juicier broth, are preferred. Sakha locals drink the broth separately from the carp flesh, often stating that consuming the broth at night ensures restful sleep. Good, fatty soups are particularly important for men, because, according to the locals, 'A man without soup is like a stallion without his balls.' My focus will now be on the theme of fat in order to capture the Sakha people's way of life through their taste perceptions.

I began to wonder what makes fat taste special to Sakhas but not to me. One local explanation is that men view fatty foods as essential fuel, similar to gasoline for SUVs, providing the energy needed for hard work and outdoor activities. Additionally, fat plays a crucial role in enhancing flavour; it contains concentrated flavours that contribute to the overall taste of food without the need for extra seasoning.

The question is: What makes fat taste special for the Sakhas? And further: What unique experiences and meanings do they associate with it? Tasting involves distinguishing and articulating flavours.⁸ It is not just that fat tastes different; it is the overall experience that sets my tablemates apart from me,⁹ because my concern is to understand how and why *their* perception of fat differs from mine.¹⁰ It may seem evident that fat may taste similar to everyone (in fact, it is the same material), but we have different kinds of experiences when eating fatty meat. Therefore, it should be recognised that those Sakha, with memories, everyday sensory experience, and knowledge about fat as a material, have different experiences than those who do not (such as some foreign anthropologists, like me, in Yakutia).

8 Borthwick, Fiona: 'Olfaction and Taste: Invasive Odours and Disappearing Objects', *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 11 (2000), 127–140.

9 Pallies, Daniel: 'How Do We Differ When We Differ In Taste?', *Ergo. An Open Access Journal of Philosophy* 8 (2022).

10 Cf. Hok-Eng Tan, Fransisca: 'Flavours of Thought: Towards a Phenomenology of Food-related Experiences', *Interdisciplinary Description of Complex Systems* 11/4 (2013), 400–414.

In the following discourse, I will employ a phenomenological approach in order to explore the fundamental difference between the taste of fat as a purely sensory experience and the overall experience of eating and perceiving fat. To facilitate the application of phenomenological considerations of taste perception to the taste perception of fat among the Sakha, I propose to narrow down the numerous phenomenological approaches to the fundamental concept – that humans do not perceive in general, but always perceive a specific thing and in a specific way.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO THE PERCEPTION OF TASTE

Phenomenological approaches in anthropology are concerned with the study of the differences in how people perceive and experience their lifeworlds. These perceptions and experiences may differ vastly, based on different personal and cultural backgrounds, memories, and previous experiences. One perceives other entities ‘as’ something. As Michael Schnegg puts it:

In brief, the ‘as’ is what phenomenology is about. When analysing this as-structure, phenomenologists typically claim that there is no dichotomy between sensorial perception and categorical thought, but that perceptual experience itself is already cognitive (in that the knowledge we have about, say, water influences the ways we ‘see’ it).¹¹

Many contexts shape the lifeworld in which one experiences fat and fatty meat/dishes in this or that way. These contexts may vary from bodily and sensory determinations to knowledge, memories, and history.¹² In other words, a phenomenologically-oriented investigation must consider both external and internal, as well as bodily and mental, factors that influence perception and experience. In the case of fat, Brad Weiss gives a splendid example of how the perception of fat depends on various factors. He states that when ‘considering the taste of pork fat and fatty pork, I argue that the taste of such fat is critical to understanding different registers of value that are available when eating pork.’¹³

11 Schnegg, Michael: ‘Phenomenological Anthropology: Philosophical Concepts for Ethnographic Use’, *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 148 (2024), 60.

12 Gallagher, Shaun and Zahavi, Dan: *The Phenomenological Mind* (New York: Routledge, 2021).

13 Weiss, Brad: ‘In Tastes, Lost and Found: Remembering the Real Flavor of Fat Pork’, in Forth, Christopher E. and Leitch, Alison eds.: *Fat: Culture and Materiality* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 34–35.

The factors influencing perception cannot be reduced to a simple subject-object relationship between the perceiver and the food. Both the individual and the food are deeply embedded in their environment, or lifeworld, which affects how perceptions and experiences are formed. This interdependence highlights that perception is integral to the lifeworld itself, with recurrent experiences shaping local contexts. Thus, a continuous interplay exists, in which perceptions, experiences, and elements within the shared lifeworld, influence one another.

As a result, focusing on first-person experiences in contrast to examining (food) 'culture' and systems of representations, does not mean that the research outcome is detached from the context, the lifeworld – rather, it means that the researcher should put the basic categories of his/her perception into brackets when learning about local lifeworlds. The sensory element, in that way, is not just an internal capacity; it is also manifested in the autonomous characteristics of things, which can then invade the body as perceptual experience.¹⁴

The structure of our lifeworlds and the uniqueness of human perception are intertwined with the entities in our environment. It is important to consider the properties of the substances that comprise living and inanimate entities. These properties are not merely passive; they actively shape our systems of representation and cultural structures. The reciprocity between these substances and our interactions with them influences the formation of our lifeworlds, with both individual entities and repeated perceptions playing a vital role in this process.

When considering perception, it is more insightful to focus on how specific entities, along with their material qualities, contribute to the process of perception rather than viewing them solely as signs or elements of cultural representations.¹⁵ The question is, how materials are embedded in the local lifeworlds. Materials are not whiteboards waiting for the human agent to mark them with cultural signs of the gustatory code; they actively participate and play a significant role in shaping human perception. Describing the way local people perceive and interact with entities made up of various materials, contributes to a better understanding of local communities.

14 Seremetakis, Nadia C.: 'The Memory of the Senses. Part 1: Marks of the Transitory', in Seremetakis, Nadia C., ed.: *The Senses Still. Perception and Memory as Material Culture in Modernity* (London/ New York: Routledge, 2017), 6.

15 Lévi-Strauss, Claude: *The Raw and the Cooked: Mythologiques*, vol. 1, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

One fundamental question in phenomenology concerns the roles of the sensing subject versus the sensed entity. Does the human mind (or rather the body)¹⁶ actively seek to understand external entities, or do these entities present the question: 'What am I to you?'¹⁷ I argue that these perspectives are less relevant from an anthropological standpoint. The researcher's focus should be on how locals perceive their lifeworld rather than dismissing the significance of materials or the perspectives of those perceiving them. In the next section, I will examine the nature of fat as understood by the Sakha people.

WHAT IS FAT IN SUBARCTIC YAKUTIA?

In his insightful article, Tim Ingold argues that materials are not static objects but come into being through interactions in their environment. Humans are not merely observers; we are deeply embedded in a dynamic 'ocean of materials.' This environment undergoes processes like mixing, separating, solidifying, and evaporating. Ingold emphasises that fundamental elements are active mediums facilitating interactions and transformations within this complex tapestry, highlighting the interconnectedness of humans and their material surroundings.¹⁸ In one of his concluding remarks, he asserts, as follows:

Thus the properties of materials, regarded as constituents of an environment, cannot be identified as fixed, essential attributes of things, but are rather processual and relational. They are neither objectively determined nor subjectively imagined but practically experienced. In that sense, every property is a condensed story. To describe the properties of materials is to tell the stories of what happens to them as they flow, mix, and mutate.¹⁹

In line with these ideas, I shall try to compile, in the following pages, the anthropologist's experiences – my ethnographic vignettes (rather than records) – on the properties of fat, and how fat is perceived, tasted, and assessed by my Sakha tablemates.

Size of fat: In general, the more fat there is in meat the better it is considered for any meal. In fatty cuts, like horse flank, for example, the width of the fat layer is observed

16 Merleau-Ponty, Maurice: *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, 2010).

17 Waldenfels, Bernhard: *Phenomenology of the Alien: Basic Concepts* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2011).

18 Ingold, Tim: 'Materials against materiality' *Archaeological Dialogues* 14 (2007), 1–16.

19 Ingold: 'Materials against materiality', 14.

and commented on by the consumers. For Sakhas, lean meat (referred to as *kötökh et*) is considered inferior. Conversely, fatty meat (known as *emis et*) is seen as desirable and associated with high enjoyment value.

Colour of fat: Natural colour can significantly enhance the enjoyment of fat. The slightly yellowish fat of velvet scoters, for example, adds to the overall experience of consuming them. Similarly, in the case of foal fat, a more vibrant colour – ranging up to orange – is often perceived as having a higher enjoyment value.

Smell of fat: Most fats should enhance a food's scent without being strong or odourless. A dry, featureless fat, or one with a strong acidic smell, is undesirable.

Texture of fat: Texture is less important for good fats. Since fats can be consumed in frozen, raw, and melted forms, good fats may have different textures.

Taste of fat: Fat can have diverse flavours, varying by animal. For instance, the fat from beef differs from that of horses. Importantly, all fats carry the specific flavours of the animal from which it came, thus amplifying and conveying them to the consumer.

In summary, fat quality varies depending on its source, as each type of animal fat has its own distinct characteristics, including both colour and texture. However, the common feature of all these fats is their ability to enhance the flavour of food, intensifying the specific tastes associated with the region,²⁰ and the animal from which they have come.

THE ANIMATE PERMAFROST LANDSCAPE

The village communities I visited in Yakutia engage in agricultural activities such as cattle and horse breeding, haymaking, and fishing – all closely tied to the affordances of the permafrost landscape. A unique feature of this environment is the thermokarst depressions known as *alaas* in Sakha. In the Central Yakutian lowlands, *alaas* meadows form a patchwork within the boreal forest, the *taiga*. The Sakha people see *alaas* meadows, not as mere natural formations, but as the result of their own

20 Cf. Trubek, Amy B.: *The Taste of Place: A Cultural Journey into Terroir* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

presence in the area.²¹ These meadows are vital for their economy, serving functions such as growing hay for harvesting, providing grazing and water, as well as supporting fishing and hunting activities. However, *alaas* meadows are also referred to as living entities with names, distinct character traits, a sense of identity, and deserving of the same respect as humans or animals.

Cognitive maps created by the Sakha people reflect this view, portraying the environment as an interconnected web of live entities rather than a simple navigational grid. These maps emphasise the socio-natural relationships that shape their understanding of the landscape. The 'space' for social actions, termed society, consists of discrete entities like individuals, while Sakha mental maps resemble sociograms that enumerate living beings. Their concept of local society, encompassing both human and non-human entities, emphasises a complementary relationship between body and soul. The Sakha believe that three interrelated souls – mother soul (*ije kut*), earth soul (*buor kut*), and air soul (*salgyn kut*) – construct the world.²² Humans possess all three souls, while other beings usually have fewer.

The eternal mother soul enriches and develops with each life, giving rise to the earth soul at conception, which remains inseparable from the body and transforms into soil upon death. *Alaas* meadows serve as a medium for relationships among animals, humans, and plants. Animals raised there are often slaughtered in the same location, imbuing the land and water with their souls. This transformation creates a breeding ground for new life. Sakha herdsman and fishermen can distinguish between soil types that affect water quality and plant growth, as the taste of the soil and water is reflected in the organisms that inhabit it, which the Sakha seek for good food.

NOURISHING MORE THAN JUST THE BODY

Therefore, Sakha culinary preference is for food that is raw, without spices. The most characteristic flavour of a particular area is accumulated in the internal organs and the fat of animals. The meat and the liver, eaten raw, are full of vitamins (*sümehin*), which are transferred to you only if you do not cook or roast the meat.

21 Crate, Susan – Ulrich, Mathias – Habeck, J. Otto – Desyatkin, Aleksey R. – Desyatkin, Roman V. – Fedorov, Aleksander N. – Hiyama, Tetsuya – Iijima, Yoshihiro – Ksenofontov, Stanislav – Mészáros, Csaba and Takakura, Hiroki: 'Permafrost livelihoods: A transdisciplinary review and analysis of thermokarst-based systems of indigenous land use', *Anthropocene* 18 (2017), 89–104.

22 Tumusov, Fedot C.: *Yal bii biliite* ('Basic knowledge on the family') (D'okuuksaj: Kuduk, 2001).

This unique taste can also be found in fatty crucian carps, caught in *alaas* lakes. These fish live in the lakes of the *alaas* as one of the very few species of fish existing there. To the Sakha, a carp is almost like a horse or a cow: it is a living creature of the *alaas* – and not of the rivers and the boreal forest. It carries a flavour that is peculiar to the land and the water (that is, the body) of the *alaas*. Nothing is in that fish that is not part of the *alaas*. It eats the plants and insects of the *alaas* pond. Unlike other fishes, whose offal is removed during cleaning, all of the offal (except the gallbladder) remains inside the carp. The way it is killed and prepared is very similar to the way the horse is slaughtered; in fact, the Sakha use the same phrase (*üös tardar*) for opening up the body of both the crucian carp and horse.²³

Having participated in many eating activities and repasts, I realised that certain local foods provide nutritional value, and that some add further intangible nourishment that feeds more than just the body. Dairy food and fatty meat are the two major sources of full-blown nourishment.

Dairy foods, particularly those with a high fat content, hold great importance in Sakha food culture.²⁴ Fatty dairy products have two respectful designations: *sölögöj*, which signifies a blessed, independently-existing substance, and *tunakh*, which refers to the product of human effort. While *sölögöj* is given to humans, *tunakh* is offered to non-humans, facilitating a two-way communication process with various entities, including lakes and spirits.²⁵

Fat from slaughtered cattle and horses is highly valued and often used as a substitute for butter. Traditionally, families compared the amount of fat collected after the slaughter of livestock, to gauge blessings. The inner fat, known as *khaha*, is particularly prized for enhancing the nutritional value of foods.²⁶ Fatter animals are deemed to be of a higher quality than the leaner variety, as their meat is considered

23 Maj, Emilie: 'Croyances et convenances iakoutes autour du sobo. Ethnographie du poisson où tout est bon' ('Sakha beliefs and customs around sobo. Ethnography of fish, which is all over good'), *L'Homme* 177–178 (2006), 303–327.

24 Gorokhov, N. I.: *Uluchshenie molochno go skota v uslovijah Respubliki Saha (Jakutija)*, ('The improvement of dairy cows in the environment of the Sakha Republic') (Novosibirsk: Sibirskoe otделение RASKhN, 2001).

25 Kolodeznikov, Sergej, K. Konstantinovich: 'Probleme tradicionnogo mirovozzrenija jakutov ('On the problems of Sakha worldview'), in *Jazyk, mif i kul'tura narodov Sibirii* (Yakutsk: Bichik, 1994), 217–226.

26 Nikolaev, Semen Ivanovich (Somogotto) *Pishcha jakutov (v svete sosednikh kul'tur)* ('Sakha food culture, from the perspective of neighbouring cultures') (Yakutsk: Jakutskij kraj, 2010).

to be more nutritious and easier to digest. Additionally, fat and butter are believed to enhance fertility, making them significant during childbirth and ritual events.

FAT AND THE LIVE LANDSCAPE

The soil of the *alaas* meadow profoundly influences rural Sakha cuisine, where the absence of spices and reliance on raw meat, blood, and fat, connect people directly to this substance. The act of slaughtering animals symbolises a reclamation of the shared resources of nature and community, emphasising the continuity of life. The Sakha's traditional system represents a deeply moral circular economy, where the role of humans is to facilitate the flow of life substances. However, Russian and Soviet policies have disrupted this balance, leading to the extinction of some species and the introduction of others – alongside the altering of the ecosystem due to climate change. Despite the pressure from the state, this circular economy has persisted for almost four centuries, but now the Sakha people face the challenge of permafrost humidification. In the Anthropocene, while human activity is dominant, local Sakhas feel increasingly disconnected from their environment; they breed fewer and fewer cattle and horses, and, in particular, the lakes and meadows that once were perceived as living entities, now seemingly do not want to communicate with humans anymore.²⁷

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KRISTEN AUTRET AND CHRISTOPHER HOLLANDER

ADAPTING TRADITIONS TO CLIMATE CHANGE

The Impact on Indigenous Food Systems in the North American Arctic

ABSTRACT

Indigenous Arctic communities rely on native species for sustenance, medicine, ceremony, and economy. Nearly half face food insecurity, worsened by climate change disrupting traditional foodways. This review examines climate change impacts on food systems and the adaptive strategies preserving cultural connections and food security.

CULTURAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT

In writing this paper, we respectfully acknowledge the Indigenous communities whose knowledge, traditions, and resilience have greatly informed our understanding of the issues discussed.¹ As non-Indigenous academics, we recognise the limitations of our perspectives and the importance of centring Indigenous voices in conversations about food systems, climate change, and health.

1 Reference to this study: Kristen Autret and Christopher Hollander: Adapting Traditions to Climate Change: The Impact of Climate Change on Indigenous Food Systems in the North American Arctic. In Anikó Báti and Patricia Lysaght (eds.): *Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage*. Budapest: ELTE RCH Institute of Ethnology – Museum of Ethnography, 2025. pp. 311–324.

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INTRODUCTION

The Indigenous communities of the North American Arctic (NAA) have long sustained their cultural, economic, and physical well-being through traditional food systems that are closely tied to the natural environment. These systems encompass the harvesting, preparation, and consumption of native species, which are vital, not only for sustenance, but also for maintaining social cohesion, cultural identity, and spiritual practices.²

However, these traditional foodways face growing threats from the rapid impacts of climate change, particularly Arctic amplification – the phenomenon of accelerated warming in the Arctic.³ This warming leads to drastic changes in ecosystems, including significant shifts in species distribution, reduced ice cover, and altered weather patterns.⁴ Simultaneously, colonialism's legacy – manifested through forced displacement, loss of land, and government-imposed agricultural policies – continues to undermine the resilience of Indigenous food systems (IFS). This legacy has left these communities more vulnerable to climate-related disruptions.⁵

COLONIAL DISRUPTIONS

The food systems of Indigenous communities across North America have been profoundly disrupted by colonial policies, forced relocations, and environmental degradation. These measures not only altered the landscapes that they rely on for sustenance, but also eroded cultural knowledge and practices, leading to a significant decline in traditional foodways.⁶ Government regulations and legal barriers restricted indigenous peoples' ability to hunt, fish, and gather traditional foods,

2 Ford, J.D.: 'Vulnerability of Inuit food systems to food insecurity as a consequence of climate change: a case study from Igloolik, Nunavut', *Regional Environmental Change* 9 (2008), 84–85.

3 Rantanen, M. – Karpechko, A.Y. – Lipponen, A. – Nordling, K. – Hyvärinen, O. – Ruosteenoja, K. – Vihma, T. and Laaksonen, A.: 'The Arctic has warmed nearly four times faster than the globe since 1979', *Communications Earth & Environment* 3 (2022), 1–2.

4 White, D.M. – Gerlach, S.C. – Loring, P. – Tidwell, A.C. and Chambers, M.: 'Food and water security in a changing arctic climate', *Environmental Research Letters* (2007), 2–3.

5 Malli, A.H. – Monteith, H. – Hiscock, E.C. – Smith, E.V. – Fairman, K. – Galloway, T. and Mashford-Pringle, A.: 'Impacts of colonization on Indigenous food systems in Canada and the United States: a scoping review', *BMC Public Health* (2023), 3–4.

6 White, et al.: 'Food and water security in a changing arctic climate', *Environmental Research Letters* (2007), 4–5.

exacerbating food insecurity and long-term health disparities, particularly among Indigenous children.⁷

In both Canada and the United States, forced relocations such as those mandated by the Indian Act (1876) and the Inuit High Arctic Relocations, systematically dismantled Indigenous self-sufficiency by displacing communities from their ancestral lands.⁸ Many groups, such as the Inuit, Métis, and the tribes of the Wabanaki Confederacy – including the Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot – suffered severe disruptions to their seasonal cycles of hunting, fishing, and gathering.⁹

The imposition of residential schools further exacerbated the loss of traditional food-practices across generations, particularly for the Iñupiat in Alaska and Inuit in Canada.¹⁰ As communities were relocated to marginal lands, they became increasingly dependent on imported, processed foods, replacing culturally significant staples. This shift to western diets had devastating public and individual health consequences, worsening food insecurity.

For many of these communities, the disconnection from traditional lands was compounded by hunting and fishing regulations that curtailed access to vital food sources. Indigenous peoples' rights to fish were overridden by government-imposed conservation measures which ignored the cultural and nutritional importance of species like seal, whale, and caribou.¹¹

Industrial development across Canada, particularly mining and logging, further contaminated water sources and reduced access to traditional food systems. This activity has also led to the contamination of fish and game with environmental

7 Malli, et al.: 'Impacts of colonization on Indigenous food systems in Canada and the United States: a scoping review', 6–7.

8 Grant, S.D.: 'Errors Exposed: Inuit Relocations to the High Arctic, 1953–1960', *Documents on Canadian Arctic Sovereignty and Security* (DCASS) (2016), 1–14.

9 Lynn, K. – Daigle, J. – Hoffman, J. – Lake, F. – Michelle, N. – Ranco, D. – Viles, C. – Voggeser, G. and Williams, P.: 'The impacts of climate change on tribal traditional foods', *Climatic Change* (2013), 40.

10 Brinkman, T.J. – Hansen, W.D. – Chapin III, F.S. – Kofinas, G. – BurnSilver, S. and Rupp, T.S.: 'Arctic communities perceive climate impacts on access as a critical challenge to availability of subsistence resources', *Climatic Change* (2016), 414–417.

11 Domingo, A. – Charles, K.A. – Jacobs, M. – Brooker, D. and Hanning, R.M.: 'Indigenous community perspectives of food security, sustainable food systems and strategies to enhance access to local and traditional healthy food for partnering williams treaties first nations (Ontario, Canada)', *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, (2021), 2–8.

pollutants, causing government advisories to discourage the consumption of traditional foods, as seen in the Sahtú and Dehcho regions of the Northwest Territories.¹² This disconnection from traditional lands and resources not only created food insecurity but also led to a loss of cultural identity, as Indigenous peoples became increasingly reliant on processed, store-bought foods, which are nutritionally inferior and culturally disconnected from traditional practices.¹³

THE ECOLOGICAL AND CLIMATE THREATS TO IFS

Arctic amplification is accelerating the disruption of ecosystems, leading to increased difficulty in predicting migrations and access to traditional food sources.¹⁴ Climate change significantly alters food sources, weather patterns, and traditional subsistence activities. First Nations in the Northwest Territories have observed shifts in migratory bird patterns, earlier spring thaws, and an increase in beaver populations – all of which disrupt traditional hunting and food preparation practices.¹⁵ Similarly, in the Yukon, declining rainfall and snowfall, which affect berry harvests and water availability, force adaptations in their subsistence strategies.

Inuit communities across the Canadian Arctic are also witnessing profound changes in their environment. Traditional hunting practices are becoming increasingly difficult due to shifting sea-ice patterns, rising temperatures, and altered wildlife migration routes. For instance, in Alaska, migration routes of key species such as bowhead whales and caribou have shifted, complicating traditional hunting practices. As a result, there has been increased reliance on processed foods in the region, leading to further health and cultural impacts.

Other Indigenous communities in Alaska, face additional challenges, including permafrost instability and changes in freshwater availability. These disruptions are

12 Ramirez, P.M. – Ratelle, M. – Laird, B.D. and Skinner, K.: 'Dietary Intakes of Traditional Foods for Dene/Métis in the Dehcho and Sahtú Regions of the Northwest Territories', *Nutrients* 14/2 (2022), 3–8.

13 Domingo, et al.: 'Indigenous community perspectives of food security, sustainable food systems and strategies to enhance access to local and traditional healthy food for partnering williams treaties first nations (Ontario, Canada)', 7–9.

14 Serreze, M.C. and Barry, R.G.: 'Processes and impacts of Arctic amplification: A research synthesis', *Global and Planetary Change* (2011), 85–88.

15 Guyot, M. – Dickson, C. – Paci, C. – Furgal, C. and Chan, Hing Man: 'Local observations of climate change and impacts on traditional food security in two northern Aboriginal communities', *International Journal of Circumpolar Health* 65/5 (2006), 403–415.

affecting the distribution of fish and game, and are driving communities toward store-bought foods, undermining the cultural integrity of their diets.¹⁶

Across these regions, the effects of climate change are both environmental and cultural. The disruption of traditional foodways threatens the transmission of knowledge, the preservation of cultural identity, and the long-term sustainability of IFS. These impacts go beyond physical sustenance, as the erosion of traditional practices has deep cultural consequences. This convergence of environmental and cultural disruptions underscores the urgent need for strategies that protect both ecological balance and Indigenous cultural heritage.

RESILIENT FOOD SYSTEMS

IFS in many Arctic and subarctic communities are still dynamic and evolving, incorporating ancient knowledge with contemporary practices. Many Indigenous and local communities have mixed food systems that combine subsistence activities like hunting, fishing, foraging, and small-scale farming with market-based activities.¹⁷ This blending of traditional and modern approaches to food provision exemplifies the resilience of IFS, which adapt to changing conditions while preserving cultural values. The integration of traditional knowledge with modern technologies helps Indigenous communities to better navigate and mitigate climate impacts on food systems.¹⁸

In Canada's Northwest Territories, Dene Nation communities heavily depend on fish like whitefish, pike, and grayling, with 86% of the population consuming fish daily.¹⁹ Similarly, Yukon's White River First Nation relies on moose, salmon, and

16 Loring, P.A. and Gerlach, S.C.: 'Searching for progress on food security in the North American North: a research synthesis and meta-analysis of the peer-reviewed literature', *Arctic Institute of North America* (2015), 386–387.

17 Galappaththi, E.K. and Schlingmann, A.: 'The sustainability assessment of Indigenous and local knowledge-based climate adaptation responses in agricultural and aquatic food systems', *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability* (2023), 1, 6, 24.

18 Raheem, D. – Holopainen, A. – Koegst, J. – Tulimaa, M. and Benkherouf, M.: 'Promoting Sustainability within the Nordic-Arctic Region's Food System: Challenges and Trends', *Sustainability* (2022), 1–9.

19 Guyot, M. – Dickson, C. – Paci, C. – Furgal, C. and Chan, H.M.: 'Local observations of climate change and impacts on traditional food security in two northern Aboriginal communities', *International Journal of Circumpolar Health* (2006), 413.

berries, drawing on ancestral practices to sustain resources and to preserve their food systems for future generations.

The Inupiat and Inuit peoples of Alaska and Canada, maintain a deep connection to traditional foods such as ringed seal, caribou, Arctic char, bowhead whale, beluga whale, and narwhal. These food systems are integral to social structures, as cultural norms governing food sharing strengthen community bonds and promote equitable resource access.²⁰ The gendered division of labour, where men hunt and women process the meat, plays a key role in maintaining cultural traditions and passing them down to future generations. These practices reflect the resilience of Inuit food systems.

For First Nations communities in Manitoba, food practices hold spiritual significance. The process of growing, harvesting, and consuming food connects these communities to the earth and to each other, reinforcing both cultural values and spiritual well-being.²¹

CULTURAL RESILIENCE AND FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

Indigenous communities across the Arctic and subarctic regions have exhibited remarkable resilience in preserving their cultural food practices despite challenges such as climate change, environmental degradation, colonialism, and modernisation. This resilience is deeply rooted in the connections between food, culture, and identity, and is sustained through traditional knowledge, adaptive strategies, and strong commitment to food sovereignty.

At the heart of this resilience is the concept of food sovereignty, which emphasises the right of communities to access healthy, culturally-relevant food, produced through sustainable and environmentally-sound methods. It also includes the right for communities to shape and manage their own food and agricultural systems.²² Indigenous communities' efforts to gain control over their food systems are essential

20 Brinkman, T.J. – Hansen, W.D. – Chapin III, E.S. – Kofinas, G. – BurnSilver, S. and Rupp, T. S.: 'Arctic communities perceive climate impacts on access as a critical challenge to availability of subsistence resources,' *Climatic Change* (2016), 415–416.

21 Cidro, J. – Adekunle, B. – Peters, E. and Martens, T.: 'Beyond food security: Understanding access to cultural food for urban Indigenous people in Winnipeg as Indigenous food sovereignty,' *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* (2015), 34–35.

22 Malli et al.: 'Impacts of colonization on Indigenous food systems in Canada and the United States: a scoping review', 3–6.

for preserving cultural heritage for future generations. Access to key species, listed in Table 1, is not only about sustenance but also about maintaining cultural identity.

The Iñupiat communities exemplify this resilience by adapting their hunting practices to environmental changes, such as shifts in the migration patterns of bowhead whales and caribou. These communities have modified their hunting techniques and timing to align with changing conditions. Elders and hunters collaborate to track new migration routes, ensuring that traditional knowledge continues to guide their subsistence practices. Despite the scarcity of traditional food sources, communal food sharing remains central to Iñupiat life, reinforcing social bonds and preserving cultural cohesion.²³

Similarly, Indigenous communities across Canada have employed diverse strategies to strengthen and revitalise their food systems. They have reintroduced indigenous crops, revived traditional hunting practices, and established community gardens through social structures such as traditional seed networks and communal labour practices.²⁴ These efforts, supported by both traditional and modern practices, have enabled communities to adapt to environmental changes while preserving their cultural ties to the land. The integration of sustainability indicators and co-management strategies has been vital in maintaining resilience and ensuring the survival of cultural identity through evolving food systems.

The practice of food sharing and communal resource management remains a cornerstone of cultural resilience across these Indigenous communities. Whether in the Iñupiat or Inuit communities, these practices support the preservation of cultural knowledge and foster food security in the face of environmental challenges. By integrating cultural practices with modern sustainability approaches, Indigenous communities ensure that their food systems continue to reflect and reinforce their cultural identities.

23 Brinkman et al.: 'Arctic communities perceive climate impacts on access as a critical challenge to availability of subsistence resources', 421–423.

24 Cidro et al.: 'Beyond food security: Understanding access to cultural food for urban Indigenous people in Winnipeg as Indigenous food sovereignty', 30.

Land Mammals	Marine Mam- mals	Waterfowl and Birds	Fish and Sea- food	Wild Berries	Wild and Me- dicinal Plants	Western Foods
Beaver	Bearded seal	Canada goose	Arctic char	Blackberry	Acorns	Canned fruit
Bison	Beluga whale	Grouse	Arctic grayling	Blueberry	Brodiaea	Canned meat
Buffalo	Bowhead whale	Long-tailed duck	Brook trout	Chokecherry	Camas	Chips
Caribou	Narwhal	Partridge	Burbot	Cloudberry	Cedar	Juice
Deer	Ringed seal	Spruce grouse	Chum salmon	Cranberry	Fireweed	Snack foods
Elk	Seal	White-fronted goose	Cisco	Currant	Kelp	Soda
Marten	Walrus		King salmon	Elderberry	Labrador tea	Sweetened drinks
Moose	Whale		Lake trout	Gooseberry	Lilies	
Muskox			Northern pike	High-bush cran- berry	Lomatium	
Otter			Pike	Huckleberry	Onions	
Polar bear			Rainbow smelt	Lingonberry	Sage	
Rabbit			Shad	Raspberry	Seaweed	
			Sturgeon	Salal berry	Sweetgrass	
			Sucker	Salmonberry	Tobacco	
			Trout	Shadberry	Yarrow leaf	
			Whitefish	Strawberry		

Table 1. *Traditional Foods Integral to Indigenous Diets and Cultural Practices. Indigenous knowledge and sustainability*

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND SUSTAINABILITY

Indigenous and Local Knowledge (ILK) has been the cornerstone of sustainable food systems within Indigenous communities for generations. This knowledge, grounded in cultural practices, keen observations of the environment, and adaptive strategies, is crucial not only for the sustainability of food systems but for the survival of Indigenous cultures. ILK embraces a holistic worldview, with the health of each element contributing to the overall balance of the ecosystem. This knowledge, passed down through generations, has enabled Indigenous communities to maintain resilient and sustainable food systems in the face of both environmental and social challenges.

For example, the Anishinaabe and other Indigenous groups approach ecosystem management with a spiritual connection to the land, utilising practices such as ceremonial seasonal harvesting and controlled burns, to maintain natural cycles.²⁵ ILK is a dynamic and evolving process, continuously shaped by interaction with the environment.²⁶ Practices, such as sustainable harvesting and biodiversity preservation, play a vital role in ensuring the long-term health of ecosystems. The transmission of Indigenous knowledge across generations is vital for sustaining food systems, combining cultural values with ecological practices. Elders share insights on animal behaviour, weather, and environmental cycles, through stories, rituals, and hands-on experiences, ensuring the continuity of sustainable hunting, fishing, and gathering techniques.

Across diverse Indigenous communities, sustainability practices are deeply embedded in ILK. Inuit communities in Nunavut, for example, use their intimate understanding of Arctic marine ecosystems to manage their resources, including seals, whales, and fish, in a sustainable manner under changing ice conditions. Adhering to traditional regulations and taboos helps to prevent overharvesting and ensures the viability of critical resources. These practices are not solely focused on resource conservation but are also about maintaining the cultural and spiritual connections to the land.

In the Northwest Territories, ILK is also applied to rotational hunting and fishing, allowing ecosystems to recover between harvests. This practice ensures that wildlife

25 McGregor, D.: 'Coming full circle: Indigenous knowledge, environment, and our future', *American Indian Quarterly* (2004), 393.

26 Mazzocchi, F.: 'A deeper meaning of sustainability: Insights from indigenous knowledge', *The Anthropocene Review* (2020), 35–36.

populations remain stable, and that ecosystems remain healthy, over the long term.²⁷ Such approaches have proven resilient to environmental changes and remain vital to the sustainability of food systems.

Many Indigenous communities are now blending traditional knowledge with modern sustainability practices to adapt to new realities. In urban areas, Indigenous communities in Winnipeg are integrating traditional food practices with urban agriculture and local food-sovereignty initiatives, ensuring the continued relevance of ILK even in non-traditional settings.²⁸ These efforts create spaces where traditional knowledge continues to play a significant role in sustaining food systems.

Globally, Indigenous communities are using ILK to respond adaptively to climate change. Responses include crop diversification, co-management of resources with governments, and community-led governance models that emphasise sustainable resource management. By integrating traditional knowledge with modern practices, Indigenous communities build resilience and sustain their food systems in the face of ongoing climate challenges.

ADAPTATIONS TO FOOD SYSTEM CHALLENGES

Indigenous communities across the NAA and subarctic regions have demonstrated resilience in the face of mounting environmental, social, and economic pressures. By combining traditional ecological knowledge with modern technology, these communities are finding innovative ways to sustain their food systems and preserve their cultural identities. Inuit hunters have incorporated snowmobiles into their traditional hunting practices, allowing them to both navigate the changing ice and terrain caused by the effects of climate change and to introduce modern conveniences. Snowmobiles increase mobility, which is crucial as animals' migration routes shift, enabling hunters to continue subsistence practices while preserving cultural traditions. This fusion of past and present ensures that traditional foodways remain viable, even in changing environmental conditions.

27 Kuhnlein, H.V.: 'Food system sustainability for health and well-being of Indigenous Peoples', *Public Health Nutrition* (2015), 2419–2424.

28 Cidro et al.: 'Beyond food security: Understanding access to cultural food for urban Indigenous people in Winnipeg as Indigenous food sovereignty', 30–32.

In both rural and urban settings, Indigenous communities are also reclaiming control over their food systems through food sovereignty initiatives. Young people play a critical role in revitalising these food systems, using urban gardens and education programmes to reconnect with traditional foodways.²⁹ These community-led initiatives not only enhance food security but also foster a renewed sense of cultural pride and resilience. The role of community-driven solutions and Indigenous-led governance is pivotal for climate adaptations and food sovereignty.

Climate change has posed significant challenges to traditional food systems, but many Indigenous communities have shown adaptability in this context. In Alaska, for example, communities have adjusted their subsistence strategies in response to shifts in the migration routes of species like bowhead whales and caribou. By altering the timing of their hunts and modifying traditional techniques, they have been able to navigate the impacts of warming temperatures and shifting ice patterns. These adaptations are guided by an understanding of the environment, passed down through generations, which allows for flexibility in subsistence practices while maintaining cultural values.³⁰

Food-sharing networks also play a crucial role in sustaining Indigenous communities. Despite increasing challenges in accessing traditional foods, many communities have maintained the practice of sharing food communally, thereby ensuring that everyone has access to culturally-significant resources. These networks strengthen social bonds and reflect the value placed on collective well-being. Sharing food goes beyond survival, reinforcing cultural practices of reciprocity, mutual support, and egalitarian community cohesion, that are integral to the social fabric of these communities.

In addition to hunting and fishing, some Indigenous communities are working to revitalise traditional agricultural practices and to reintroduce Indigenous crops.³¹ By blending traditional farming knowledge with modern sustainability practices, such as permaculture and regenerative agriculture, these communities are creating resilient, localised food systems. These efforts are critical for strengthening food

29 Bagelman, C.: 'Unsettling food security: the role of young people in Indigenous food system revitalisation', *Children & Society* (2018), 222–224.

30 Charlton, G.: 'The law of Native American hunting, fishing and gathering outside of reservation boundaries in the United States and Canada', *Canada-United States Law Journal* (2015), 6–7.

31 Bodirsky, M. and Johnson, J.: 'Decolonizing diet: healing by reclaiming traditional Indigenous foodways', *Cuizine* 1/1 (2008), 'Abstract'; <<https://cimcc.info/system/files/atoms/file/Decolonizing%20Diet%20Healing%20by%20Reclaiming%20Traditional.pdf>> accessed 6 May 2025.

sovereignty and reconnecting people with their cultural food practices. The revitalisation of traditional crops is also a powerful act of cultural restoration, enabling communities to regain control over their food production while reinforcing their ties to the land.

CONCLUSION

Indigenous communities in the Arctic and subarctic regions of North America face profound challenges related to food security, climate change, and the preservation of traditional foodways. The impacts of environmental degradation, industrial development, and colonial legacies, continue to undermine the cultural and nutritional sustainability of these communities. Climate change is drastically altering ecosystems, reducing access to traditional foods, and exacerbating health disparities across Indigenous populations.

Despite these challenges, Indigenous communities have demonstrated resilience. Adaptive strategies, rooted in Indigenous knowledge and cultural practices, provide insights into sustainable food systems that prioritise both human and ecological well-being. Indigenous communities demonstrate resilience in the face of environmental changes through communal food-sharing networks, sustainable harvesting practices, and the integration of traditional knowledge with modern innovations.³²

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³² Young, T.K. – Broderstad, A.R. – Sumarokov, Y.A. and Bjerregaard, P.: 'Disparities amidst plenty: a health portrait of Indigenous peoples in circumpolar regions', *International Journal of Circumpolar Health* (2020), 8–9.

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ROGÉRIA CAMPOS A. DUTRA

THE CULTURE OF MILK IN THE RURAL SOUTHEAST OF MINAS GERAIS, BRAZIL

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the role of milk in the daily life of rural families that live in the Mantiqueira Mountains, located in the southeast of Minas Gerais, the largest milk-producing state of Brazil. Based on interviews, the research investigates the experiences and customs of these families concerning milk, as well as the challenges involved in keeping a traditional way of living in the face of pressures on milk production.

LIVING WITH AND BY MILK: THE CASE OF THE MINAS GERAIS COUNTRYSIDE

On the arrival of European conquerors in Brazil, native populations had neither milk in their diet nor domesticated mammals for milk production.¹ In terms of food, Portuguese settlers brought sheep, goats and cows, for both meat and milk and dairying purposes. While sheep had only a minor impact due to the country's climatic conditions, and goats were concentrated mainly in the Northeast region, it was the cow that predominated, by adapting to suitable climatic conditions and vast territories. As Valenze² points out, the cow turned out to be the main source of non-human milk in the world, not only due to the animal's nature and size, but mainly because of the nature of European expansion, in which traditional European agricultural and breeding practices were transplanted to the New World. *Portmanteau biota* – domestic animals, plants, pathogens and weeds, that

1 Reference to this study: Rogéria Campos A. Dutra: The Culture of Milk in the Rural Southeast of Minas Gerais, Brazil. In Anikó Báti and Patricia Lysaght (eds.): *Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage*. Budapest: ELTE RCH Institute of Ethnology – Museum of Ethnography, 2025. pp. 325–334.
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2 Valenze, Deborah: *Milk: A Local and Global History* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2011).

accompanied Europeans – is the term coined by Crosby³ to designate this transplantation procedure which, at the expense of native species, contributed to the success of the European colonists. Milk production in the New World was not unconnected with the expansion of European attitudes towards the land and livestock, thereby implying the imposition of particular kinds of property laws, labour arrangements, and the dietary habits, of the colonisers.

Minas Gerais is a Brazilian state located at the southeast of the country, and its name, meaning ‘General Mines’, refers to the presence of extraction fields for numerous kinds of minerals in its territory. European exploration, which began in 17th century, focused on the search for gems, precious metals, and Indian slaves. During the 18th century, Minas Gerais became the gold-mining centre of Brazil, in which the extraction and export of gold dominated the economic dynamics of the colony. Fuelled by a workforce comprised of African slaves, the gold rush resulted in a huge influx of European migrants, as well as the imposition of a Portuguese bureaucratic system for controlling gold extraction and mineral transportation – which implemented an isolation policy on the mining region. The decline in gold extraction (by the end of 18th century) led to the emptying of mining villages, with families and their slaves moving to the countryside, thereby expanding the borders of human occupation. Although conventional historical interpretations consider the post-gold-mining period to be one of economic stagnation, some authors⁴ highlight the fact that this opinion is based mainly on exportation criteria. According to these authors, even after the gold-mining period, subsistence farming continued to develop in autonomous and independent farms, located on the banks of the main routes to the coast, which supplied the needs, not only of mining villages, but also of travellers, merchants and muleteers who crossed the territory.

As an intermediate region, between mining centres and the main exportation port located in Rio de Janeiro, Zona da Mata was considered a strategic region for the Portuguese crown concerns. Recognised, at that time, as a natural barrier to the smuggling of mineral wealth, it was called ‘East Backyards’ by Portuguese authorities,

3 Crosby, Alfred: *Ecological Imperialism: the biological expansion of Europe, 900–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 368.

4 Carrara, Angelo and Benites, Flavio: ‘Pecuária leiteira e comércio de queijos em Minas Gerais, séculos XVIII–XX’ (‘Dairy farming and cheese trade in Minas Gerais, 18th–20th centuries’), *História Agrária* 89 (2023), 95–126; Carneiro, Patrício and Mattos, Ralfo: ‘Geografia histórica da ocupação da Zona da Mata Mineira: acerca do mito das “áreas proibidas”’ (‘Historical geography of Zona da Mata Mineira’s colonisation: the myth of the “forbidden areas”’), *Proceedings of the 14th Seminar on the Economy of Minas Gerais* (Cedeplar, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, 2010), 1–25.

and its current name, Zona da Mata de Minas Gerais ('Forest Zone of Minas Gerais') derives from the Atlantic forest which was originally the dominant vegetation cover.

Later, as a result of the 'coffee cycle' – a period in which coffee was the main export product of the Brazilian economy – coffee plantations, which had spread along this territory by the middle of the 19th century, acted as a driving force behind its settlement and development. One of the consequences of this economic expansion was the large-scale destruction of original forests, as coffee plantations were replaced by pastures, so much so, that, today, only the summits of some elevations have small patches of residual forests.

In fact, Zona da Mata had already been acting as a strong supplier of agricultural goods and dairy products, such as cheese and butter, to the main centres, such as Rio de Janeiro, since the gold-mining period, but this activity increased substantially after the decline of coffee production. This was due to farmers dedicated to milk and dairy production, taking advantage of land availability, better transport conditions, and the growth of the consumer market in the cities. As a rural region lying relatively close to urbanised consumers, its rugged relief, characterised by the predominance of hills, narrow valleys and some mountain ranges, was considered favourable towards the production of milk suitable for cheese production. Moreover, Zona da Mata also had a specific regional breed of cattle with an aptitude for milk production, as well as a proliferation of molasses grass (*Melinis minutiflora*), a perennial grass native to Africa. The 'africanisation' of regional pastures was one of the effects of the intense commerce with Africa, from which many species of grass came, together with slaves and animals.

Minas Gerais's place in people's imagination as the land of milk and cheese, of authentic rural, religious and strongly-traditional values, to which the state's identity was strongly attached, was being forged during the first decades of 20th century. So attached to milk production was the state's image of Minas Gerais that, during the first decades of the Brazilian Republic period, at the beginning of 20th century, there were a governance model called the 'Coffee with Milk Policy', reflecting the predominance in national power of the oligarchies of São Paulo and Minas Gerais, the first recognised as the greater coffee producer and the second as the milk one.

The Zona da Mata region featured the first dairy industry in Brazil, founded in 1888. By means of increasing milk production in other areas of the state and the country, the region still continues to direct a significant portion of milk and dairy products to

regional cities and to the great centres of the Southeast. The region has a land-usage structure characteristic of family farming – besides milk production, the local economy is based on subsistence agriculture, and maize and beans cropping associated with horticulture and domestic poultry breeding.

There is much talk about the importance of milk-production or cheese-making for the regional economy, generating income for the locals, as well as jobs in dairy industries, but the way in which milk and cheese are present in the daily lives of the locals – we are referring here to small farmers and rural workers who live on their own land or in small villages – is not very well known. This aspect was a focus of our research on which this paper is based. The research in question adopted a qualitative approach aimed at getting to know these rural dwellers' experiences, perceptions and customs concerning milk, conducted by means of 20 in-depths interviews. These were interviews featuring just a few questions and long answers, progressing in the form of conversations that allowed the discussion to flow naturally and to be driven by the respondents' input. We considered this to be the more adequate form of an interviewing procedure for a population known to be good for telling stories, not only about themselves, but also about their neighbours and ancestors.

As reported by these farmers and rural workers, dealing with milk production on a small property implies that a full day's work is dedicated to it. Unlike their forebears, the farmers nowadays do not have so much time to dedicate to crop production or other rural activities, because of the pressure from dairy factories requiring ever-higher levels of milk production. In fact, the relationship between a small milk producer and these dairy companies is based on unequal terms: the lower the quantity of milk the farmers produce, the lower also is the price paid per litre of milk, and although milk production varies according to seasons, these farmers are expected to maintain a steady level of milk-production throughout the year. So, if in past times they milked their cows once a day, nowadays they milk them twice daily. This in turn requires that the cows be fed more often, with the result that the farmers must dedicate more and more of their time to restoring pastures and planting forage crops for animal fodder. In the case of maize, a traditional food present in their own diet, the farmers are increasingly buying this food for home consumption instead of planting it, thus dedicating their resources, such as land and time, to the provision of maize crops for their cattle. Time and money are scarce resources that must be applied to land, crops and cattle, leaving these small farmers in difficulty when trying to transform their work into money. Sometimes, it seems as if it would be wiser for them to hire themselves out some few days of the week to larger farmers in order to

improve the 'cash flow' of their own businesses. That was a theme that emerged during the interviews with these farmers, who have great expertise in different kinds of rural activities, such as the construction and repair of fences, a much-required task in the countryside. Even though working for others is a chance to earn money – they could, for instance, then invest in improving the genetic quality of their livestock – instead of milking their cows twice a day; but they refuse to do this, showing a kind of pride in being landowners, a position which does not align with providing labour to larger farmers.

MILK AND DAIRIES IN DAILY LIFE

The cultural relevance of milk and milk derivatives is evident from their importance in the locals' livelihoods. We can observe how milk production mobilises knowledge and skills in terms of cattle breeding, which may involve a variety of tasks, such as selecting and buying good and healthy cows, relying on visual assessment, taking care of injured or sick animals, or planting crops for animal feed. Furthermore, dairy produce has an important part to play in the people's diet, as their consumption behaviour is influenced by the values and ideas that they hold about the nutritional qualities of milk.

Even if milk and dairy products are regarded as one of the staples of their diet, there are certain nuances in their consumption according to the different products, events, and people involved. Liquid and fresh milk is a beverage for children – they drink it with coffee or chocolate powder, during breakfast, as part of a mid-afternoon snack and, sometimes, at night before bedtime. In former times, before health campaigns about breastfeeding babies became general, cow's milk had been used in this context since early days. Except for some herdsmen who drink it when milking cows, milk is not a beverage for adult men, it being associated with sickness or childishness. Although there are no reliable data on *Cachaça* (Brazilian White Rum) drinking in the state's rural areas, it is said, among the locals, that this beverage consumption is greater than that of milk among male adults in the countryside. Nevertheless, milk is a basic ingredient in local recipes for deserts and homemade pastries, such as cakes, pies and biscuits. Popular beliefs regarding milk's medicinal qualities are constantly present in ordinary conversation – such as drinking a cup of warm milk to calm a person and to induce sleep, or drinking milk for the relief of stomach disorders, or even washing one's eyes with milk to alleviate eye irritation. Fermented milk, such as curd, is not frequently prepared, as it is only used in cake- and biscuit-

recipes when milk gets fermented accidentally. Butter, although consumed in large quantities, is nowadays acquired in shops; some women told me that refrigeration tanks used to store milk for selling to dairy factories do not allow cream to settle on top of the milk, thus hindering them from collecting cream to make butter.

Cheese, on the other hand, is a highly valued food, eaten during breakfast and snacks, with coffee and corn cakes; sometimes it is eaten alone or even with bananas, and it is also used in deserts, in which fruit jams and ‘dulce de leche’ are accompanied by a piece of cheese. Although it is a product greatly associated with regional identity, the kinds of cheeses prepared and consumed by locals today are not the same as those which were traded during 19th century – the latter so much appreciated by tourists nowadays. The people mainly consume fresh cheese, instead of matured and semi-matured varieties, despite the latter being part of their ancestors’ diet. The reasons for this change touch on the social and economic factors attached to the challenges associated with keeping a traditional way of living that they face. Firstly, nowadays they have access to refrigerators in order to preserve fresh cheese, a highly perishable foodstuff which, not undergoing a maturing process, can be enjoyed immediately after being produced. Secondly, they cannot afford to set aside the very large quantities of milk required to prepare matured and semi-matured cheese, due to pressures from the dairy factories on milk production. And lastly, they prefer fresh-cheese making due to pasture changes. Although molasses grass had an important role in cattle breeding in the past, nowadays the pastures produce braquiária (*Brachiaria*) – another African grass introduced into Brazil in the 1960s, for the rearing and fattening of cattle. According to the farmers, even though braquiária grass improves the availability of feed for livestock, thereby enhancing productivity, molasses grass, they argue, was better for the production of a fat milk, which is more appropriate for matured and semi-matured cheese production. That is the reason why some of them contend that the milk produced nowadays does not easily support mature cheese making.⁵

Although in pre-industrial times in Europe, milking was traditionally considered a female task, nowadays, milking, in these small rural families, is part of the sphere of male activity. Cheese for domestic consumption, for example, is made by women

5 Gonçalves, Urias: *Construindo uma tradição: a circulação do queijo minas artesanal na cidade de Silverania, Zona da Mata Mineira* (‘Building a tradition: cheese circuits in the town of Silverania, Zona da Mata Mineira’), Ph.D. thesis (Programa de Pós-Graduação em Ciências Sociais. Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora, 2018), 158.

from milk separated by their husbands. Along with eggs, cheese is gifted to urban relatives when these women go to the city.

MILK SHARING

A gendered division of work based on family roles – women dedicate themselves to domestic activities including keeping chickens and gardening, while men plant crops and raise cattle – can clearly be observed, as part of the conservative traditional values and customs that the farming families of this region, hold. Social inequality is reflected in the distribution of the land area – apart from landless workers living in rural villages, almost 80% of rural properties have less than 100 hectares per farm.⁶ There are low levels of spatial and social mobility among the inhabitants, as most of them have their roots ‘on that soil’, marrying relatives or neighbours, and surviving by working on land. In former times, the Catholic Church was a strong institution, regulating everyday life, carrying out baptisms, marriages, funerals, and linking the community in Catholic festivities, among which Holy Week played a predominant role. At that time, farmers used to share the milk produced on Holy Friday, because, as they told me, they had no refrigerators to store the milk. This was their only day off during the year, in which milk was not transported to dairy factories. One of the effects of the arrival of electricity, and then also refrigerators, to local rural areas, was, that milk-farmers stopped this form of distribution, as milk produced on Holy Friday could now be stored in the refrigerators for transporting to the milk factory on the following day. However, some farmers still maintain the tradition of milk sharing nowadays; moreover, there are other rural localities along Zona da Mata’s territory which remain firmly committed to this event,⁷ pointing out further reasons than just economic concerns, for maintaining this custom.

Holy Friday is a festive day, celebrated with enthusiasm by landless rural workers, as well as by other residents in local villages. On the previous day (Holy Thursday) they organise themselves by selecting the vessels they will use to collect the donated milk, so that they can bring a great amount of it home. Then they wake up at dawn on Holy Friday – some of them do not even sleep at all on Holy Thursday night – and

6 Zoccal, Rosangelo – Souza, Antonioc and Gomes, Aloísio: *Produção de leite na agricultura familiar* (‘Milk production in family farming’), *Boletim de Pesquisa e Desenvolvimento* 17 (2005), 20.

7 Pedrosa, Daniela: *A partilha do leite: reciprocidade, circuitos alimentares e sociabilidade em uma comunidade rural em Minas Gerais* (‘Milk sharing: reciprocity, food circuits and sociability in a rural community of Minas Gerais’), Ph.D. thesis (Programa de Pós-Graduação em Ciências Sociais. Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora, 2023), 176.

go walking, in groups, carrying their vessels, to farms where milk will be distributed. It is a time of fun, loud conversations and jokes, and the experiencing of intimacy due the fact of sharing the same journey. They treat it as an adventure, having unexpected experiences, such as walking long distances along rural paths or mud roads in the dark, and, furthermore, asking for something for free, which still does not come easy to them. On coming back to their homes, family members, relatives and neighbours – women and children – have already gathered in order to prepare various recipes involving milk, with an emphasis on those which demand great amount of it, such as ‘dulce de leite’ and rice pudding, as well as cakes and biscuits. The women cook during the whole day, converting milk into delicacies in such a way that they do not leave any of the collected fresh milk unused. Then, in addition to tasting every prepared plate, they divide the delicacies into small vessels, sharing them with the cooking group, neighbours and relatives, as well as gifting them to the farmers who have donated the milk.

But ‘gifts are never truly free’, according to Marcel Mauss’ study⁸ on forms of exchange that occur in traditional societies. Comparing such societies with modern ones, Mauss points out that the reduction of things to commodities, which are – ‘by nature’, as economic liberalism tells us – detached from their owners, is a very recent phenomenon in human history. As with early exchange systems highlighted by Mauss, the milk-sharing event in Zona da Mata of Minas Gerais tells us something about the obligation to give, to receive, and to reciprocate, configuring a pattern in which the distribution of milk among the locals builds relationships, a reciprocal exchange. These exchanges occur among groups, not individuals, building alliances and inspiring social solidarity, or, at least, a set of obligations based on social conventions that is not materially reduced – the milk itself – but involves a morality, the moral of reciprocity. However, it is worth remembering that it is also a way of relieving latent conflicts among the locals due to social inequalities, such as the difference between farmers and landless workers, or between those who have plenty of food (symbolised by the milk) and those who live with food constraints.

8 Mauss, Marcel: *The gift: the form and reason for exchange in archaic societies* (London: Routledge, 1990), 224.

CONCLUSION

The connections we have with food encourage diverse research approaches in order to understand its everyday importance in our lives. As a means of nourishment, food involves large fields of biological investigations, but in order to understand food as a phenomenon it is also necessary to investigate the social and cultural dimensions of our diet. Food can assist us in discovering the story of our history, from environmental relationships to economic systems, from regional identities to traditional customs and values.

Milk occupies a special place in the large sphere of studies dealing with food and nutrition, thus building bridges between the different fields of research. This is the reason why Wiley⁹ states that milk is a good example of biocultural interaction because, if, on the one hand, the ability to digest milk in adulthood is a good example of biological variation across populations, on the other, this fact strengthens the perception that milk became edible due to ecological, geographical, historical and cultural circumstances.

Historical conditions enabled milk and dairy products to be present in the Brazilians' diet. As a population derived from European colonisation, however, there are differences in milk-diet rules inside the country, such as between rural and urban populations. The research findings to date indicate that there is a strong connection between the milk-production system – a rural area strongly attached to milk production as an economic activity – and its presence in the local diet. Economic transactions have been the main path to milk circulation, linking farmers, workers and dairy factories, as part of the milk-production chain in rural areas of Zona da Mata. However, the milk-sharing tradition, as an alternative form of exchange, is still active, a transaction that transcends divisions between individuals and groups, objects and persons. The uniqueness of milk as food, for these rural people, is that its crucial role is recognised, not only in terms of material subsistence, either economic or nutritional, but that it is also connected with meanings. As a basic element of their social life, its consumption reveals the power of a cumulative tradition, sometimes denoting the pressures of being excluded by the broad impacts of modernisation, while sometimes also acting as a symbol of belonging and the building of alliances and moments of solidarity.

9 Wiley, Andrea S.: *Cultures of Milk: the biology and meaning of dairy products in the United States and India* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

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TAIJA KAARLENKASKI

NATIONAL MILK. GENDER AND FINNISHNESS IN THE MILK PROMOTION STRATEGIES OF THE FINNISH DAIRY NUTRITION COUNCIL

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on a significant actor in Finnish milk promotion – the public health organisation ‘Maito ja terveysterveys ry’ (‘Dairy Nutrition Council’), active from 1958 to 2020. It aims to explore the gendered and nationalistic imagery in the Council’s promotional material and to discuss how nationality is intertwined with gendered representations in that context.

INTRODUCTION

For decades, Finland has been among the highest consumers of milk worldwide.¹ Accordingly, dairy husbandry is still considered a cornerstone of Finnish agriculture even though, in more recent times, the number of dairy farms has collapsed and milk-consumption rates have been consistently falling since reaching a peak in the late 1950s.² One reason why milk has been so highly appreciated in Finland may have been the effective way in which it has been promoted for almost one hundred

1 Reference to this study: Taija Kaarlenkaski: National Milk. Gender and Finnishness in the Milk Promotion Strategies of the Finnish Dairy Nutrition Council. In Anikó Bádi and Patricia Lysaght (eds.): *Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage*. Budapest: ELTE RCH Institute of Ethnology – Museum of Ethnography, 2025. pp. 335–349.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61380/978-963-567-084-0-21>. This study has been funded by the The Research Council of Finland (project number 347838).

2 ‘List of Countries by Milk Consumption per Capita, *Wikipedia*. <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=List_of_countries_by_milk_consumption_per_capita&oldid=1233498249> accessed 4 December 2024; ‘Milk Consumption by Country 2024’, World Population Review. <<https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/milk-consumption-by-country>>; ‘Balance Sheet for Food Commodities 2023, Preliminary and 2022 Final Figures’, Luke, Natural Resources Institute Finland. <<https://www.luke.fi/en/statistics/balance-sheet-for-food-commodities/balance-sheet-for-food-commodities-2023-preliminary-and-2022-final-figures>> accessed 4 December 2024; ‘Finland: Number of Dairy Farms 2022’, Statista. <<https://www.statista.com/statistics/898161/number-dairy-farms-finland/>> accessed 13 December 2024.

years – cow's milk and dairy products have been seen as an integral part of a healthy diet, and the consumption of dairy products has been endorsed by public institutions.³ Thus, it may be assumed that the messages and imagery of milk promotion have been influential in Finnish culture. Commonly, marketing includes gendered characters that are easily recognisable as female or male, and this was, and is, the case also in relation to milk marketing in Finland. Furthermore, appealing to domesticity and nationality has been a typical trope in food marketing in many countries, and, in milk promotion in particular, these attributes have often been highlighted.⁴

In this paper, I shall focus on one significant actor in Finnish milk promotion – the public health organisation 'Maito ja terveys ry' ('Dairy Nutrition Council'). It was established in 1958 and continued in existence until 2020, with the aim of advancing the consumption of milk and milk products. In this context, the Council produced and distributed promotional leaflets, brochures, and posters for different age and gender groups. Moreover, the Council's figurehead, 'Maitotyttö' ('Milk Maid') or 'Maitolähettiläs' ('Milk Ambassador'), promoted milk at public events, and at day-care centres, schools and garrisons.⁵

My particular aim is to explore the gendered and nationalistic imagery that the Dairy Nutrition Council has produced in its promotional materials, and how this imagery has changed over the past sixty years. My main questions are: What kinds of characteristics are related to different genders in Finnish milk promotion; what kinds of assumptions, in terms of milk and milk products, are linked with girls, boys, men and women; and how is nationality intertwined with gendered representations?

3 Kaarlenkaski, Taija: 'Exploring the Roots of High Milk Consumption in Finland', in Syrjämaa, Taina et al. eds.: *Animal Industries: Nordic Perspectives on the Exploitation of Animals since 1860* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2024), 45–62; Vinnari, Markus – Santaoja, Minna and Jokinen, Pekka: 'Institutional Work in Maintaining and Disrupting the Finnish Milk Regime', in Vinnari, Eija and Vinnari, Markus eds.: *Sustainable Governance and Management of Food Systems: Ethical Perspectives* (Wageningen: Wageningen Academic Publishers, 2019), 295–300.

4 Ichijo, Atsuko and Ranta, Ronald: *Food, National Identity and Nationalism. From Everyday to Global Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 61–81; Andersson, Helen, 'Nature, Nationalism and Neoliberalism on Food Packaging: The Case of Sweden', *Discourse, Context & Media* 34 (2020), 1–10. <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2019.100329>>; Andersson, Helen: 'Recontextualizing Swedish Nationalism for Commercial Purposes: A Multimodal Analysis of a Milk Marketing Event', *Critical Discourse Studies* 16/5 (2019), 583–603. <<https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2019.1637761>>.

5 For a full-length research article on the topic, in Finnish, see Kaarlenkaski, Taija: 'Kansallinen maito. Sukupuoli ja suomalaisuus Maito ja terveys ry:n maitomarkkinoinnissa' ('National Milk. Gender and Finnishness in the Milk Promotion of The Dairy Nutrition Council'), in Hämäläinen, Niina – Kupiainen, Tarja and Taavetti, Riikka eds.: *Joustavat sukupuolet – Muuntuvat merkitykset* ('Flexible Genders – Changing Meanings') (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2024), 137–166.

As research material, I use the archived documents of the Dairy Nutrition Council. I will discuss both visual and textual representations of gender and nationality that reflect and reproduce the social norms of Finnish society. I understand gender and nationality as being performative in character, produced and reproduced in cultural representations and actions.

EXPLORING FINNISH MILK PROMOTION

After the World War II, Finland experienced problems with public health due to inadequate nutrition. From 1947 to 1951 Finland received food aid for children in poor families from UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund). Moreover, due to the inadequate handling and storage conditions of fresh milk, UNICEF financially supported the acquisition of refrigeration and pasteurisation machines in the Finnish dairies. At the same time, there was public interest in increasing the consumption of milk in many parts of Europe. This was also the case in Finland where several civic organisations expressed their concerns about both the position, and the quality, of milk in nutrition. In 1954, 'Maidon käytön edistämisvaltuuskunta' ('Delegation for the Advancement of Milk Use') was established on the initiative of Finnish temperance organisations. The broader aim, however, was to establish an association for the purposes of milk promotion, but due to a lack of funding, such an organisation – the Dairy Nutrition Council – was not founded until 1958. In continuation to their earlier efforts to improve milk processing in Finland, the Finnish UNICEF committee made an award of a start-up grant, and the committee partly funded the Council for another decade – until 1968.⁶ According to its constitution, the Council sought 'by advancing the use of milk and dairy products to support and develop public health and an abstinent way of life.'⁷ The Council presented itself as a non-commercial civic organisation, and it claimed to provide unbiased information based on official nutritional recommendations.⁸ The members of the Council were dairy companies, along with different public health and housekeeping groups, as well as farmers' organisations. The Council was mainly funded by the member dairies, but it received

6 Packalén, Leena and Urho, Ulla-Marja: *Muista maito: Maito ja terveys ry vuosina 1958–2008* ('Remember Milk: The Dairy Nutrition Council in 1958–2008') (Helsinki: Maito ja terveys, 2008), 6–7; Osman, Hannele: *Kun UNICEF auttoi Suomea 1947–1951* ('When UNICEF helped Finland 1947–1951') (Helsinki: Suomen UNICEF-yhdistys, 1991), 13, 21–63.

7 The Archives of the Dairy Nutrition Council. Hallinnolliset asiakirjat, Me allekirjoittaneet perustamme 1958. The National Archives of Finland.

8 See, e.g., Packalén and Urho: *Muista maito*, 4; The Archives of the Dairy Nutrition Council. Tiedotteet ja lehtikirjoitukset 1970–1992, Maito ja terveys ry 1982. The National Archives of Finland.

grants for campaigns from, for example, the state of Finland, Finland's Slot Machine Association (RAY), and the EU.⁹ In 2020, the Dairy Nutrition Council was disbanded and milk promotion was transferred to an organisation called 'Ruokatieto Yhdistys ry' ('Finfood – Finnish Food Information'), which promotes, in general terms, food produced in Finland.¹⁰

From the late 1950s to the end of the 2010s, the Dairy Nutrition Council produced material that permeated Finnish society – from toddlers to pensioners. Promotional leaflets, as well as brochures and posters, about milk and milk products, were distributed in, for example, day care centres, children's health clinics and schools. Moreover, the Council also published promotional press releases, as well as a series of slides and films, and lectures on the topic were given at different events and even broadcasted on national radio and TV channels. Publication-ready articles were sent to newspapers and magazines, and these were widely published as submitted. After the closedown of the Council in 2020, its materials and archives were stored in the National Archives of Finland and are drawn on in this article. In this study, the archival materials used include mainly leaflets and press releases that show the gendered and national meanings linked to milk production and consumption, as well as documents related to the work of the 'Milk Maid' and the 'Milk Ambassador'. The discussion focuses on the period from the beginning of the 1970s – when the Dairy Nutrition Council's promotion literature started to target different age and gender groups – until 2020 when the Council's activities were wound up.

The materials are explored utilising multimodal critical discourse analysis, which discusses texts and images together, as they both participate in meaning-making. In this approach, visual elements are also seen to communicate discourses and social practices. Special attention is paid to verbal and visual choices and the ideologies and power structures that they serve.¹¹ The main focus is on representations of gender and nationalism, which are often intertwined. Nationalism refers to an ideology according to which every nation should have its own nation state. As Michael Billig has suggested, nationalism might manifest itself not only, for example,

9 Packalén and Urho: *Muista maito*, 7, 65.

10 'Ruokatieto Yhdistys ry jatkaa Maito ja Terveys ry:n työtä – ravitsemusaineisto on edelleen tilattavissa', Ruokatieto. <<https://ruokatieto.fi/ruokatieto-yhdistys-ry-jatkaa-maito-ja-terveys-ry-tyota-ravitsemusaineisto-on-edelleen-tilattavissa/>> accessed 5 December 2024.

11 Ledin, Per and Machin, David: *Doing Visual Analysis. From Theory to Practice* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2018), 36–41; Rose, Gillian: *Visual Methodologies. An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2016), 138–142; Andersson: 'Nature, Nationalism and Neoliberalism on Food Packaging', 3.

in the form of ceremonies on Independence Day, but also as representations and symbols in everyday, banal contexts.¹² Moreover, national narratives tend to imply gendered conceptualisations on the characteristics, places, and tasks that women and men should have in society.¹³

MILK PROMOTION DIRECTED AT GIRLS AND WOMEN

The Dairy Nutrition Council aimed at making milk consumption tempting for both girls and women and boys and men. The Council was especially concerned about the possibility of teenage girls and middle-class women abandoning milk drinking. According to the Council, these groups were interested in dieting and might see milk and dairy products as fattening, and they might, therefore, stop consuming them. It pointed out in its literature that this was not a reasonable concern, because, according to the Council, low-fat dairy products do not cause an increase in weight.¹⁴ In general, dieting was represented as a female ‘problem.’ This was already evident in the Council’s leaflet in 1974, the first one specifically directed at teenage girls, which included a comic strip in which a girl feels tired and weak. It turns out that she has anaemia because she does not have a proper diet and she is trying to lose weight. After she eats food with sufficient amounts of protein, calcium, vitamins and micronutrients, she starts to feel better. Dairy products are here represented as an integral part of a healthy diet and although her weight increases by a couple of kilogrammes, it is stated that this does not matter, because the weight gains are ‘in the right places,’ and she even has a romance with a sporty young man.¹⁵

Similar messages prevailed in leaflets and campaigns directed at girls and young women in the 1980s and 1990s. For example, the 1997 campaign entitled ‘Luonnolliset mitat’ (‘Natural measures’) included a leaflet that emphasised in its introduction that

12 Billig, Michael: *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995), 4–7.

13 Yuval-Davis, Nira: *Gender & Nation* (London: Sage, 1997); Mayer, Tamar: *Gender Ironies of Nationalism. Sexing the Nation* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1999).

14 In contemporary research, the relationship between low-fat dairy products and weight management has turned out to be somewhat ambiguous, but some findings suggest that consuming non-fat dairy products may be related to lower abdominal adiposity and lower weight. Moreover, low-fat dairy products are recommended in the current Nordic Nutrition Recommendations for health reasons. See Wilkinson, Klarissa R. et al.: ‘Milk-Fat Intake and Differences in Abdominal Adiposity and BMI: Evidence Based on 13,544 Randomly-Selected Adults’, *Nutrients* 13/6 (2021), 1832. <<https://doi.org/10.3390/nu13061832>>; ‘Nordic Nutrition Recommendations 2023’ <<https://pub.norden.org/nord2023-003/>> accessed 21 January 2025.

15 The Archives of the Dairy Nutrition Council. Esitteet – koululaiset, Mukaan vauhtiin 1974. The National Archives of Finland.

everyone has a unique body shape, and that slight chubbiness is not bad for girls. The booklet also included images of three teenage girls representing different heights and weights. However, they were described as 'suitably slim' and none of them was overweight or even roundish.¹⁶ Although body positivity was not widely discussed until the 2010s, the message of the 1997 campaign seems to be similar to later discussion in this context: on the surface, all kinds of bodies are represented as acceptable. Nevertheless, even though variation in body sizes and shapes were underlined in the text, the imagery foregrounded the ideal of a slender body as being healthy and desirable. Similar contradictory meanings are to be found in contemporary discussions of body positivity.¹⁷

For adult women, the main argument against abandoning dairy products was the threat of osteoporosis, a health condition that causes bones to become weak and fragile, especially for women after the menopause. To prevent osteoporosis, it is important to have sufficient vitamin D and calcium intake from one's nutrition as well as to get enough exercise.¹⁸ The argumentation concerning osteoporosis and calcium intake was similar to that directed at girls – dieting is not necessary, and it may even be harmful, especially if consumption of dairy products is reduced or abandoned completely. Accordingly, milk was represented as the most convenient, if not the only, source of calcium, and it was emphasised that females especially need dairy products in their diet in order to keep their bones in shape.¹⁹ Although dieting was rejected, nevertheless, the imagery of the leaflets consisted mainly of representations of slim female bodies (Fig. 1). Moreover, especially in the 21st century materials, the ideal of slenderness was hidden in phrases, such as 'well-being' and 'healthy lifestyle'. These discourses of welfare and empowerment reflect the new liberal language in which the free choice of the individual is ostensibly emphasised while social norms determine strongly the ideal body.²⁰

16 The Archives of the Dairy Nutrition Council. Esitteet – koululaiset, varusmiehet, maitokannukisa, atk-ohjelmat, Sinähän olet hyvännäköinen: Tytöt ja ruoka 2003. The National Archives of Finland.

17 Harjunen, Hannele: 'Kehopositiivisuus: radikaalista yhteiskunnallisesta liikkeestä uusliberaalin terveyden tuottajaksi?' ('Body positivity: from radical social movement to producer of new liberal health?'), in Eskelinen, Teppo – Jokinen, Eeva and Rokkonen, Lilli Aini eds.: *Tehostamisyhteiskunnan jäljet* ('Traces of the Efficiency Society'), (Jyväskylä: SoPhi, 2023), 35–56.

18 Wiley, Andrea: *Re-Imagining Milk: Cultural and Biological Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 84–86.

19 See Wiley: *Re-Imagining Milk: Cultural and Biological Perspectives*, 69–72.

20 Harjunen: 'Kehopositiivisuus: radikaalista yhteiskunnallisesta liikkeestä uusliberaalin terveyden tuottajaksi?', 42–43.



Fig. 1. The cover of the leaflet 'Pysytään lujina – naiset!' ('Let's stay strong – women!').
(Photo by Ruokatieto Yhdistys, 2015)

MILK PROMOTION DIRECTED AT BOYS AND MEN

For boys and men, milk was not presented as a solution to a specific health problem, such as osteoporosis. Rather the focus was on healthy eating habits and the meaning of nutrition for muscle formation. The meaning of muscles could be seen, for example, on the covers of the 'Pojat ja ruoka' ('Boys and food') leaflets from 2004 and 2014. In the earlier version, a well-built young man holding a milk glass receives a love letter, whereas a short-stature boy beside him, who is eating fast food, can only look enviously on. In the 2014 edition, a teenage boy is showing off with his bare biceps looking energetic and powerful. The leaflet also included other photos of boys showing their arm muscles, and although these could be interpreted as hyperbolic and humorous, nevertheless, the ideal of a muscular male body becomes clear.²¹ While appearance-related pressures have been widely discussed in relation to female bodies, it has been pointed out that the ideal male body has also been portrayed as being slender and trained, and that many boys and men may have problems with this model.²²

The Dairy Nutrition Council also had campaigns for men. For example, in 2012, it launched a campaign entitled 'Kovat kundit juovat. Maitoa' ('Tough guys drink. Milk') (Fig. 2), directed at men aged between forty-five and sixty-four years of age. The title of the campaign probably referred to the fact that, on average, men drink more alcohol than women, but this stereotype was challenged by the surprising end-of-the-campaign-title that combines toughness and milk drinking. The figurehead of the campaign was Mikko Salo, a fire-fighter foreman and winner of the competition, 'World's fittest man', in 2009. In the campaign poster, he was seen doing press-ups with a milk glass in front of him. As a winner of a competition that requires physical strength and endurance, and working in a managerial capacity in a masculine field, it may be argued that Salo represented stereotypical white, muscular hegemonic masculinity.²³ However, there was also a somewhat 'soft' type of imagery in the campaign leaflet – a photo showing middle-aged men smiling and drinking smoothies, for example. Moreover, a form of well-being discourse, similar to what

21 The Archives of the Dairy Nutrition Council. Esitteet – koululaiset, varusmiehet, maitokannukisa, atk-ohjelmat, Pojat ja ruoka 2004; Pojat ja ruoka 2014. The National Archives of Finland.

22 Kyrölä, Katariina: 'Ruumis, media ja ruumiinkuvat' ('Body, media and body images'), in Mäkelä, Anna – Puustinen, Liina and Ruoho, Iiris eds.: *Sukupuolishow. Johdatus feministiseen mediatutkimukseen* ('Gender show. Introduction to feminist media studies'), (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2006), 125–126.

23 'Maaailman kovakuntoisin mies löytyy Porista', Yle Uutiset. <<https://yle.fi/a/3-5282520>> accessed 10 December 2024; Gambert, Iselin and Linné, Tobias: 'From Rice Eaters to Soy Boys: Race, Gender, and Tropes of "Plant Food Masculinity"', *Animal Studies Journal* 7/2 (2018), 138–140. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3298467>>.

had been directed at women in the 2000s, was also applied to men. It is of interest to note that while the campaign-leaflet text emphasised listening to one's own feelings and preferences, and while it endorsed moderate changes of lifestyle, the campaign illustration featured an extremely fit figurehead, and the title also underlined the 'toughness' of men. This indicates that both masculine and feminine attributes may be found in modern manhood.

BLUE-AND-WHITE DAIRY MARKETEERS: 'MILK MAIDS' AND 'MILK AMBASSADORS'

From 1973 to 2005, the Dairy Nutrition Council organised a 'Milk Maid' competition. Just once – in 1997 – a 'Milk Boy' was chosen. The tasks of the 'Milk Maid' included, for example, performing at exhibitions, grocery stores, day-care centres, schools and garrisons, and on formal occasions arranged by the Dairy Nutrition Council for the promotion of milk and dairy products. In 2006, the beauty-contest like competitions for the 'Milk Maid' ceased, and the assignment was changed to that of 'Milk Ambassador'. Instead of being a mere figurehead, the 'Milk Ambassador' was a nutrition expert, who was expected to have qualifications in the subject. A candidate for this assignment was sought for by means of a formal job announcement, instead of, as in the case of the 'Milk Maid' competition, by advertisements placed in newspapers, magazines, and on milk cartons.²⁴ In 2019, the assignment was changed to that of 'Milk and Nutrition Expert', and only one person held this position before the Dairy Nutrition Council was closed down in 2020.²⁵

Although the job description and requirements became more professional over time, the uniform of the 'Milk Maid' and the 'Milk Ambassador' remained the same from the late 1970s until 2018. In 1976, fashion designer, Tarja Vuokko, designed 'working clothes' for the 'Milk Maid'. The outfit included a skirt with blue and white stripes, a white shirt, a blue vest, and an embroidered pocket on the hip. According to the Dairy Nutrition Council, the dress resembled 'a traditional peasant festive dress'.²⁶ The outfit was also reminiscent of Finnish national costumes, and, together with a garland, the appearance easily became associated with the 'Finnish Maiden',

24 Packalén and Urho: *Muista maito*, 27–30; The Archives of the Dairy Nutrition Council. Maitotyöt ja Maitolähettiläät 1975–2019, 23. Kansainvälinen Maitopäivä. The National Archives of Finland.

25 The Archives of the Dairy Nutrition Council. Maitotyöt ja Maitolähettiläät 1975–2019, Haemme maidon ja ravitsemuksen asiantuntijaa 2019. The National Archives of Finland.

26 The Archives of the Dairy Nutrition Council. Maitotyöt ja -lähettiläät 1975–2019, Maitotyön työn historiaa, undated. The National Archives of Finland.

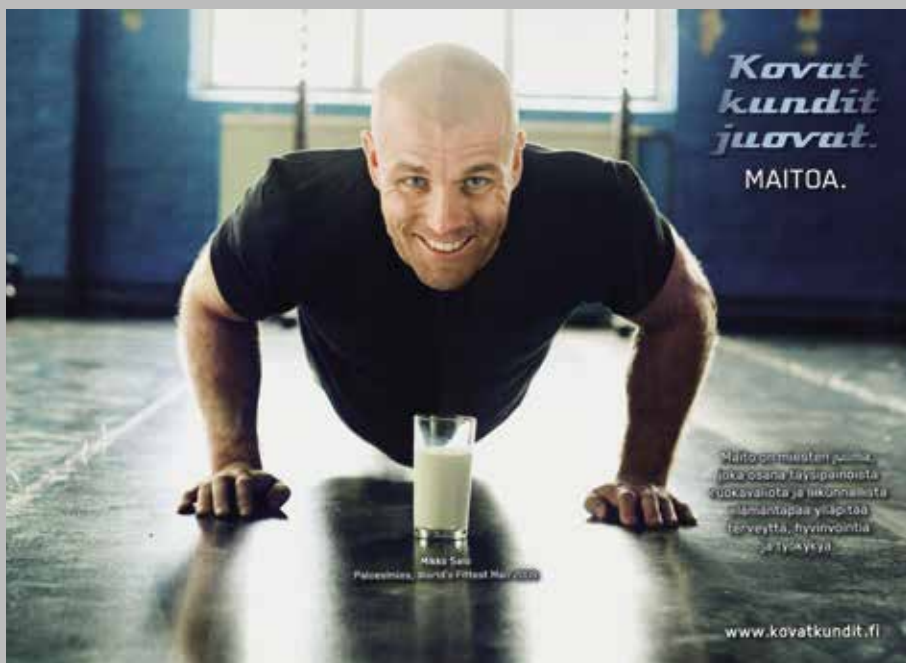


Fig. 2. The poster of the campaign 'Kovat kundit juovat. Maitoa' ('Tough guys drink. Milk'). (Photo by Ruokatieto Yhdistys, 2012)



Fig. 3. 'Milk Ambassador' 2006–2008, Hanna Haponen, in a promotional photo with a cow. (Photo by Ruokatieto Yhdistys)

the personification of Finland, that dates to the late 19th century; and it was probably not a coincidence that the dress had the same colours as the Finnish national flag. From the late 19th century, the figure of a young woman in folk dress was used to symbolise Finnish national identity, which was threatened under Russian rule. A visual representation of the 'Finnish Maiden' dressed in a vertically-striped skirt and a dark vest, became an established illustration in the Finnish press in the 1920s and 1930s when Finland was already independent, and it has been a well-known Finnish national symbol ever since.²⁷ The 'Milk Boy' also posed in a blue and white outfit – a blue shirt with a white knitted sweater on his shoulders – in the promotional photo.

In promotional photos, the 'Milk Maids' and the 'Milk Ambassadors' often posed under birch trees or in other kinds of 'natural' environments, and sometimes even with cows (Fig. 3). The environment emphasised the naturalness and freshness associated with the 'Milk Maid', and, at the same time, these characteristics expanded to include images related to milk. In the marketing of dairy products, national nature imagery and the countryside have been utilised in several countries.²⁸ Furthermore, the cow has become a symbol of milk and the countryside, and it has been argued that the image of the cow has been fetishised in the marketing of dairy products: it induces ideas of authentic and pure agrarian culture, which may never have existed in reality.²⁹ Regarding 'Milk Maids' and 'Milk Ambassadors', their task was to embody health, naturalness, Finnishness, and the countryside, in a self-evident, banal way.

CONCLUSION

The Dairy Nutrition Council may be seen as an influential element of Finnish nutrition marketing, as its materials were distributed widely through public

27 Reitala, Aimo: *Suomi-neito. Suomen kuvallisen henkilöitymän vaiheet* ('Finnish Maiden. The Phases of Visual Personification of Finland') (Helsinki: Otava, 1983), 86–92, 133–135; Valenius, Johanna: *Undressing the Maid. Gender, Sexuality and the Body in the Construction of the Finnish Nation* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2004), 17–33.

28 Hakoköngäs, Eemeli and Sakki, Inari: 'The Past as a Means of Persuasion: Visual Political Rhetoric in Finnish Dairy Product Advertising', *Journal of Social and Political Psychology* 7/1 (2019), 514–517. <<https://doi.org/10.5964/jssp.v7i1.1107>>; Andersson, 'Nature, Nationalism and Neoliberalism on Food Packaging', 4–5.

29 Jönsson, Håkan: *Mjök: En kulturanalys av mejeridiskens nya ekonomi* ('Milk: A Cultural Analysis of the Dairy Counter's New Economy') (Stockholm/Stehag: Brutus Östlings Bokförlag Symposion, 2005), 79; Molloy, Claire: *Popular Media and Animals* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 115; Linné, Tobias and Pedersen, Helena: 'With Care for Cows and a Love for Milk. Affect and Performance in Swedish Dairy Industry Marketing Strategies', in Potts, Annie ed.: *Meat Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 118.

institutions, thus reaching large audiences. The world of the Council's leaflets and posters may be seen as being heteronormative, Finnish, white, and middle-class. Only white, 'Finnish-looking' people, appeared in the images in the publicity material, although Finland has become more international in outlook, at least in the 21st century. This promotional material, therefore, excluded different ethnicities and sexual minorities, as if milk drinking – and Finnishness – did not belong to them.³⁰ In the materials, the ways in which different genders were represented were rather stereotypical, although the imagery used in this context started to become more diverse in the 21st century. Moreover, the relationship to being overweight, as presented in the Council's promotional literature, seemed to be contradictory. On the one hand, it was claimed that 'all types of bodies are acceptable', and dieting was rejected, especially if that meant abandoning the consumption of dairy products. On the other hand, the Council gave tips on weight management, and the leaflets and posters showed images of slender and muscular bodies. Thus, it may be argued that the Council reproduced the ideal of slimness in their materials.³¹ Furthermore, although one 'Milk Boy' was chosen in the history of the Dairy Nutrition Council, the qualities of milk were mainly embodied by attractive, stereotypically feminine appearances in the figure of the 'Milk Maid' and 'Milk Ambassador'. This figurehead represented naturalness, health, purity, the countryside, and Finnishness. These unspoken and self-evident characteristics demonstrated that by drinking milk, not only health, but also an ideal Finnishness, is constructed and maintained.

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30 See Yuval-Davis: *Gender & Nation*, 71; Hoegaerts, Josephine et. al.: 'Finnishness, Whiteness and Coloniality: An Introduction', in Hoegaerts, Josephine et al. eds.: *Finnishness, Whiteness and Coloniality* (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 2022), 1–17.

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PART V:
ETHNIC, LOCAL AND
TRADITIONAL FOOD:
MEANINGS IN A COMPARATIVE
PERSPECTIVE



ANIKÓ BÁTI

FOOD AS MESSENGER. ON THE EXAMPLE OF SLOVAK CUISINE IN HUNGARY

ABSTRACT

Food culture has always had a significant role in determining identity and community cohesion. In the process of social discourse about the past, inclusion, and locality, local communities select, reconstruct, and construct their shared food heritage. Elements of traditional peasant life, such as pig slaughtering, take place in a community space, following a re-created scenario. This paper focuses on recent changes in food culture and highlights the heritage practices of food and eating habits in the case of a multi-ethnic settlement in Hungary.

INTRODUCTION

Food and eating habits act as a message that is easily understood by everyone.¹ They are a link between the past and the present. In my study, I wish to present the activities of Slovak tradition bearers in Hungary in the context of food culture, highlighting their food-heritage² programme – the pig slaughter – as an example of the preservation and transmission of knowledge that works well for community building.

1 Anikó Bati ORCID: 0000-0002-7615-4044. Reference to this study: Anikó, Bati: Food as Messenger. On the Example of Slovak Cuisine in Hungary. In Anikó Bati and Patricia Lysaght (eds.): *Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage*. Budapest: ELTE RCH Institute of Ethnology – Museum of Ethnography, 2025. pp. 353–366.

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2 Carr, Gilly – Sørensen, Marie L.S. and Rose, Dacia Viejo: 'Food as Heritage', in Lightfoot, E. – Liu, X. and Fuller, D.Q. eds.: *Far from the Hearth: Essays in Honour of Martin K. Jones* (Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, 2018), 145–151. <<https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.38309>> accessed 28 April 2025; Di Giovine, Michael A. and Brulote, Ronda L.: *Edible Identities. Food as Cultural Heritage* (Farnham, Surrey – Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Group, 2014).

Csömör, an ethnically and religiously diverse village near Budapest, in Pest County, Hungary, is only one kilometre distant from the 16th district of the city. It is one of the largest villages in Hungary. Its population has doubled in the last twenty-five years (currently over 10,000 inhabitants) as a result of migration to the area due to its proximity to the capital, Budapest. The coexistence of Slovak and German nationalities, and the increase in the number of Hungarians over the centuries, has led to specific cultural interactions. At the same time, both the Slovaks and the Germans have each preserved their language, their traditional costumes, and their Roman Catholic and Evangelical religions, respectively, as well as many elements of their traditional eating habits. It is a fascinating task to explore how food and food preparation interact in community organisation and in the shaping of identity.

The work of the tradition bearers of the 'House of Our Tót Traditions'³ in Csömör, which is the focus of this study, is remarkable for its role in local community life. There are a number of other civil society organisations in the village that build on cultural resources, but the 'House of Our Tót Traditions' is notable for its organisational activities, programmes, and network of contacts. In addition to hosting spectacular festive events such as weddings and Easter sprinkling,⁴ the group has also revived the tradition of pig slaughtering, involving staged performances in original folk costumes and using traditional tools. It has 120 members. It has been working continuously since 2006. Its programmes are based on the Slovak traditions of Csömör. However, its members are not only Slovaks from Hungary, but can include anyone interested in community life. From taking part in cultural competitions to the making of traditional jam, the members organise almost 100 events a year. The traditional group is made up of people of all ages, dressed in colourful folk costumes, all of whom can learn the traditions again and, driven by nostalgia, experience the revival of some of the elements of the peasant way of life.

As research fellows at the Institute of Ethnology, HUN-REN (ELTE from August 2025) Research Centre for the Humanities, in Budapest, my colleague, Katalin Juhász, and I are investigating food and heritage practices in relation to local and ethnic identity in Csömör, with a focus on these Slovak tradition bearers of the

³ The adjective 'Tót' is the equivalent of the Slovakian ethnonym that is used here among the Slovaks living in Hungary. Gyivicsán, Anna: *Anyanyelv, kultúra, közösség. A magyarországi szlovákok* ('Mother tongue, culture, community. Slovaks in Hungary') (Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 1993), 55.

⁴ Easter sprinkling tradition in Hungary: on Easter Monday, the boys used to sprinkle the girls with water – nowadays they do so with perfume – as a health magic tradition. In return, the girls give them decorated eggs.

'House of Our Tót Traditions'.⁵ The central question of our work is what motivates their efforts to preserve and create traditions, and how does the fading peasant past become an identity-forming factor in the life of the local community – which is growing in numbers and becoming more colourful.⁶ As participant observers, we attended several of the traditional group's annual events and interviewed members of, and visitors to, the programmes. Using Christopher Ray's culture-economy model, we analyse how cultural resources are used to build community and to strengthen local identity.⁷

THE SLOVAK MINORITY IN HUNGARY

In the Middle Ages, the Slovaks lived in a large part of the northern, high mountainous, forested region, of the Kingdom of Hungary. Their main occupation was animal husbandry. From the end of the 18th century, due to several waves of immigration and resettlement, Slovaks and other ethnic groups arrived in present-day Hungary, in the parts of the country reconquered from the Ottoman Empire, thus in previously depopulated but economically more favourable villages. The village of Csömör, for example, was settled by Slovaks and, in the same way, by Germans, also.⁸ Later, as a result of internal migration, settlements with a majority Slovak population were established in the central and southern parts of Hungary.

5 Báti, Anikó – Juhász, Katalin – Zentai, Andrea and Vargha, Anita: 'Szlovák hagyományrekonstrukció és örökségesítés Csömörön' ('Heritagisation and the Reconstruction of Slovak Traditions in Csömör'), *Ethno-lore* 36 (2019), 81–122.

6 Báti, Anikó: 'Traditional Food as Cultural Heritage in Hungary', *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* 68/2 (2024), 481–498; DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1556/022.2024.00005>> accessed 28 April 2025.

7 Ray, Christopher: 'Culture, Intellectual Property and Territorial Rural Development', *Sociologia Ruralis* 38/1 (1998), 1. 3–20. <<https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9523.00060>> accessed 28 April 2025; see further: Bendix, Regina: 'Tourism and Cultural Displays: Inventing Traditions for Whom?', *The Journal of American Folklore* 102/404 (Apr.–Jun., 1989), 131–146; <<https://doi.org/10.2307/540676>> accessed 28 April 2025. See more: Eitler, Ágnes: Az örökség narratívája. Egyéniségek és intézmények, motivációs- és hátráltató tényezők a népi kultúra színpadra állítása mögött ('The Narrative of Heritage: Individuals and Institutions, Motivating and Hindering Factors behind the Staging of Popular Culture') in Ament-Kovács, Bence and Eitler, Ágnes eds.: *Örökségképzés, kulturális emlékezet, identitás* (Budapest: BTK Néprajztudományi Intézet. 2023), 403–444. (Néprajztudományi Könyvtár 1). <<https://doi.org/10.61380/978-963-567-071-0-09>> accessed 28 April 2025; Eitler, Ágnes and Ament-Kovács, Bence: 'Discourses of Heritagization in East-Central Europe', *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* 68/2. (2023) 273–285; DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1556/022.2024.00020>> accessed 28 April 2025.

8 The Slovaks were in the majority in Csömör until the beginning of the 20th century, when the language change to Hungarian accelerated in parallel with the population increase due to the Hungarian settlement. By 1941, only 6.5% of the 4,000 inhabitants identified themselves as Slovaks, and everyone spoke Hungarian. From the 1980s, the population of the settlement began to grow

In Pest County, Slovak villages do not form a coherent block as they are surrounded by Hungarian villages. This has had a conservative effect on the Slovak minority's language use and culture as a whole, so that archaic features have been preserved for a long time in these contexts. In Csömör, the heritage of some aspects of the Slovak cuisine is derived from the regions of origin of this ethnic group.⁹ Thus, cabbage, sauerkraut and potatoes, as well as seasonal vegetables, were important ingredients in their cuisine. Until the middle of the 20th century, meat consumption was relatively low among them. Smoked pork, sausages and bacon were used only as seasoning in everyday dishes. Fresh meat on Sundays and holidays consisted mainly of poultry. The first course, soup, was often seasoned with sour cream and tomato juice. Pasta dishes also consisted mainly of potato noodles. Dumplings, too, were also served as a soup garnish and as a main course. A larger group of courses is made up of dishes and menus adopted from Hungary. These reflect the influence of the surrounding Hungarian and German cuisines – such as pasta made from wheat flour.

As a result of cultural interaction, new ingredients – such as tomatoes in Csömör – have been adopted and incorporated into their Slovak cuisine. For example, Slovaks from Békéscsaba, 200 kilometres southeast of Pest County, who live in the paprika-growing area, jokingly mock the sausages made by Slovaks from the Budapest area: 'This is no sausage!', they say, because they make their own famous sausages, known all over the country, with the much more spicy paprika.

With the nationalist movements that began in the 19th century, the cultural values of minorities in Hungary began to change. This effect was reinforced by the socio-economic and political events that affected the whole country. Changes in language-use and cultural identity were brought about by the institutional system of the state, by the language of administration and of education, and by religious practice. However, despite these factors, few people moved to Czechoslovakia after the First World War.¹⁰

again, thanks to the migration of people from Budapest. Today there are almost 11,000 inhabitants in Csömör. See Horváth, Lajos: *Csömör története* ('History of Csömör') (Csömör: Csömöri nagyközség Önkormányzatának Képviselő-testülete, 2000).

9 Stolicna, Ratislava: 'Food as an Ethnic-Identity Indicator of the Slovaks in Hungary as Exemplified by Bread', in Lysaght, Patricia ed.: *Food and the Traveller. Migration, Immigration, Tourism and Ethnic Food* (Cyprus: Intercollege Press, 1998), 200–206.

10 Most of the Slovak-speaking territories of the pre-war Kingdom of Hungary were recognised as part of Czechoslovakia.

Intellectual and material traditions can be interpreted in many different ways in the local culture of Csömör. Since the second half of the 20th century, there have been folk music and other groups concerned with the preservation of traditions in Csömör.¹¹ The colourful folk costumes, and some customs such as Easter sprinkling and wedding ceremonies, already institutionalised as a result of cultural competitions, still remain as cultural events forming part of the staging of folk culture.¹² In folklore groups, people of different faiths have carried out their traditional activities, and still continue to do so, as a united local community. As a result, local identity has become the defining element of individual identity, replacing religious identity.

As part of the political regime-change after the fall of communism (1989), national minority self-governments have been established in Hungary, since 1993. This gave a new impetus to the organisation of local communities for the purpose of identity-building. Thus, central calls for proposals were launched for minorities. These not only provided resources but also addressed the relationship between culture and community. As a result, traditional groups, not only in Csömör, but in all the surrounding settlements inhabited by Slovak minorities, staged elements of traditional peasant life and spectacular displays of folk costumes. The groups have established close links with each other. They have also adopted each other's ideas for revival programmes. One example is the slaughter of pigs carried out in every Slovak village in Pest County every winter.

The basic source of Slovak identity in present-day Hungary is knowledge of their settlement history in the country in the 18th and 19th centuries, the fate of the settlers, and the folk culture they brought with them and which they shaped in their new homeland. This common past is documented in a number of village houses,

11 In the first half of the 20th century, the majority of the inhabitants of Csömör lived from agriculture and intensive horticulture. Proximity to the capital and good transport links not only provided new employment opportunities, but also helped to spread urban culture and lifestyles into Csömör village. At the same time, the ethnic and religious identities of the minorities remained strong.

12 In the 1920s and 1930s, thanks to their favourable income situation, the people who lived from agriculture were able to spend more on clothing. This led to the late flowering of their peasant, rural, and urban culture. The folk costume enriched the image of the settlement. Until the 1950s and 1960s, the majority of Slovak women and girls wore traditional folk costumes. Even today, there are about 20 elderly women who have dressed in folk costume all of their lives. See more: Fülemile, Ágnes: Folk art heritage and tradition in Hungary, in Götz, Eszter ed.: *'Hand/Craft/Art. National Salon 2018. Folk Art'* (Budapest: Műcsarnok Nonprofit Kft., 2018), 45–61.; Fülemile, Ágnes, Social Change, Dress and Identity: Observations on the Disintegration of Peasant Culture as Exemplified by Rural Women's Clothing in Hungary from the First World War to the End of the Kádár Era Socialism, *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* 65/1 (2020) 107–186. <<https://doi.org/10.1556/022.2020.00007>> accessed 28 April 2025.

historical publications, and cookery books. The spirit of gastro-nationalism is alive and well among Slovaks in Hungary. Today, this knowledge is passed on, not only orally, but also by means of local history and ethnographic events and through school education.

PRESERVATION OF TRADITION/TRADITION CREATION AND FOOD HERITAGE IN THE 'HOUSE OF OUR TÓT TRADITIONS'

The reconstruction and renewal of traditions and the creation of new traditions play a special role in the fashioning of the local traditional food heritage. Different generations have different attitudes towards Slovak food. Among the oldest generations, there are still some who have partially preserved and passed on the traditions of the peasants – in their eating habits, for example. Some elderly women frequently prepare nutritious Slovak dishes for their families. Their children and grandchildren also like the old local flavours, but they no longer eat these kind of dishes regularly, since they no longer meet today's nutritional standards. This generation has gradually moved away from the traditional peasant way of life. For them, community life, which reflects the norms and customs of the past, is just an opportunity to experience local customs.

Food also serves as a channel of communication for the Slovakian community in Hungary, and, as a kind of an 'experience of the past', it has become an easily-deciphered and a marketable product of gastronomic tourism, both within the local community and beyond. The traditional group, the 'House of our Tót Traditions', sells Slovakian food at their events in the so-called 'Tót Kitchen', but they also organise canning, jam making, cake baking and pig slaughtering in the village house. The latter (pig slaughtering) is described in more detail here. The products are sold. In this way, the public, including schoolchildren and younger generations, are taught the process and the way of making traditional dishes, thus replacing the organised family setting in which these skills were formerly learned.

The practice of pig slaughter and self-sufficiency in meat consumption survived in most Hungarian villages until the end of the 20th century, but since the 1990s the practice has declined throughout the country. Families have access to a wide range of shops where they can buy pork. At the same time, pig-slaughtering skills are no longer taught to young family members, and many rural households lack tools for meat processing.



Fig. 1. A traditional kitchen with open and closed wood-fired ovens and stoves in House of our Tót Traditions. (Photo by Anikó Báti, Csömör, 2022)



Fig. 2. Traditional costumes appropriate to their work are worn by all generations of the traditional group. The leader gives a toast on the morning of the slaughter of the pigs. (Photo by Anikó Báti, Csömör, 2022)



Figs. 3, 4. They document their work by filming and photographing it, and teach the younger generation the traditional method of scalding pig's hair. (Photo by Anikó Bati, Csömör, 2022)

The aim of the regular pig slaughter, called *zabijacska* in Slovak, which has taken place at the 'House of Our Tót Traditions' since 2012, was to enable the group to provide the pork and sausages consumed at its events. The venue was the village house as a 'stage'. At the instigation of the leader of the group, they collected work clothes, tools from the stove, and pots and pans, wooden spoons and sausage stuffing machines, all of which could be used to reconstruct the work processes and methods of pig-slaughtering of past times. The old cooking and baking utensils are not stored and displayed as dead museum objects, but are used for the same culinary tasks as in the past. Thus, today, pigs can be slaughtered, without using plastic bowls or other modern equipment, just the old ones from past times.

The division of labour among the tradition bearers is different from that in a family when the slaughtering of a pig takes place. Under the leadership of the group leader, the work is done by the members of the group who are willing to do so, but not by everyone. There are about 30 people who are active in this regard – those who are free at the required time and want to take part in the event, in whatever task they feel like doing. The leader is responsible for everything. Proper dress, appearance, stage decorum, order of work, personal safety, the documenting of the session, and the selling of the products, are all her concern. The pigs are slaughtered nowadays by an amateur butcher who learnt the skills of butchery, processing and seasoning, from his grandfather. The traditional division of labour between the sexes is also present here: the men do the meat processing and sausage making, while the women cook the evening meal. Many of the younger members of the group help with the washing-up and cooking, while others assist with the serving of the meals or the selling of the products. They are the ones who do not want to do the hard work that the slaughtering entails. They do not like the smell, the grease, or the touch of raw pork, or they do not eat meat at all.

Children who want to take part in the traditions are also involved in these activities, with or without the presence of their parents, depending on their age. As part of the school's traditional activities, the children prepare soup noodles and stuff sausages in pfor the pig slaughter. There are also spectators (10 to 15 people), of all nationalities, from the village, who come to watch passively from a distance and who buy the stuffed cabbage and sausages, but they do not stay long. The sausages are now in demand, as 200 kgs of meat are prepared the day before the pigs are slaughtered, so that the sausages can be sold from the morning of the slaughter.



Fig. 5. The temporary exhibition in the village house shows different generations of sausage stuffing equipment. (Photo by Anikó Báti, Csömör, 2022)



Fig. 6. The butcher and the leader of the traditional group show how the different generations of sausage stuffing equipment were used in the past. (Photo by Anikó Báti, Csömör, 2022)

The pig-slaughtering event has taken on more and more functions. Apart from the production of food, it is also an opportunity to educate and entertain people, to compare old and new tools and techniques used in the preparation of meat, and to sell products and dishes. Today, the slaughtering is a traditional event, mainly for the local population, but certainly not for the Slovak people only. However, it is not a gastronomic festival in the sense of a tourist destination in itself.

The tradition bearers deliberately document the slaughter activities online with photos and films.¹³ In this way, they broaden the circle of people to whom the local traditions are addressed. On the other hand, the images also record the living practice of traditions in the way they are organised, planned, and implemented. However, staging also implies limitations. In the course of the planned and staged event, only those details of the session that are considered spectacular are presented in detail to the audiences. For example, the beginning of the public part of the pig slaughter is marked by the actors changing into their traditional costumes at the start of the process.

However, the slaughter, organised as a spectacle and as a community event, can no longer, in the absence of personal links and regular reinforcement, replace the transmission of traditional knowledge within the family. It is only at the weekend that members of the tradition bearers' group dress up in their traditional costumes and perform traditional peasant customs on the 'stage,' so to speak. During the week, consumer society norms prevail and food is bought rather than produced.

The way pigs are slaughtered in Csömör, the tools that are used, and the working process involved, are not specific to the area, as pig slaughtering is also carried in a similar manner in other parts of the country. In the 20th century, based on practices learnt from German professional butchers, the way pigs are processed was standardised throughout the country. But, actually, this process fits in well with the tradition bearers' programmes as part of the traditional peasant way of life, and act as an easily understood signal that brings the ideal of peasant self-sufficiency within reach, and which is associated with a number of popular dishes.

13 See also <https://www.facebook.com/csomoritotok/?locale=hu_HU> accessed 28 April 2025.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the customs, norms and objects of rural living are no longer very much alive in the everyday life of families, so that in many cases the elements presented here cannot be regarded as an organic continuation of earlier practices. Events that strengthen identity and build community, are organised beyond of the household and involve the entire local community. This represents the rural idyll and functions as a central element of the cultural economy, while also enhancing the value of the locality. Traditions have different meanings for members of each generation of the group and different meanings for locals outside of the group. For some, they are authentic Slovak traditions, but the older people know that not everything was as the group presents it today. For outsiders, on the other hand, the whole programme is interpreted as a custom linked to the village of Csömör, with little emphasis being placed on the national or religious background. Unlike the folk costumes and festivals, the process of slaughtering, and the tools used, are no longer ethnically specific to Csömör. Tradition bearers have managed to adapt the procedure in such a way that, in the face of globalisation and urbanisation, it is successfully staged as a community-building event that evokes the peasant past. In this process, food is presented as an easily understandable message that is communicated between the performers and the audience.

The leader of the Slovak tradition bearers plays an important role. She is also the organiser and leader of this process, which goes beyond the individual and kinship, and which is not only a tourist attraction, but also part tradition-preserving and part tradition-making.¹⁴ The interpretation and the steps of heritage building, i.e. how the local heritage is created, can be well understood through her work (e.g. the procurement of elements from the past, the financial and human resources necessary to prepare the training and the presentation of the customary act).

The group of tradition bearers studied has carried a piece of the past of peasant and national culture, still accessible in memory, into the present, and incorporated it into their present living conditions through the representation of heritage. They have socialised a piece of the past, further strengthening their own local and Slovak ties

14 See more: Eitler, Ágnes, *Az örökség narratívája. Egyéniségek és intézmények, motivációs- és hátráltató tényezők a népi kultúra színpadra állítása mögött*, ('The Narrative of Heritage: Individuals and Institutions, Motivating and Hindering Factors behind the Staging of Popular Culture') in Ament-Kovács, Bence, and Eitler, Ágnes, eds., *Örökségképzés, kulturális emlékezet, identitás*, (Budapest: BTK Néprajztudományi Intézet, 2023.), 403–444. (Néprajztudományi Könyvtár 1). <<https://doi.org/10.61380/978-963-567-071-0-09>> accessed 28 April 2025.

and their sense of belonging. This can be used to build a sustainable future based on local resources.

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KATALIN JUHÁSZ

FOOD HERITAGE AND FOOD RITUALS AS AN INDISPENSABLE ELEMENT OF CONTEMPORARY 'CROSSOVER FOLK CUSTOMS'

THE EXAMPLE OF CSÖMÖR (HUNGARY)

ABSTRACT

Nowadays, 'classical' folk traditions are seen as an inherited spiritual and material cultural value from the past. The new millennium has seen the emergence of 'glocalisation', a process that goes hand in hand with globalisation: the role of local culture has been enhanced, which strengthens local identity and can also be a source of cultural capital that can be monetised through festivals and tourism. The activity of the new generation of 'traditional' communities is not limited to maintaining a conserved, static cultural heritage in an unchanged form. Instead, they are both reconstructing and rebuilding traditions, with the aim of creating new traditions that successfully appeal to the people of the present. This paper focuses on rituals and community interactions, presenting food types. Through some examples, it looks at how new folk customs are constructed according to the principles of crossover, design thinking and social innovation.

LOCATION OF THE RESEARCH: CSÖMÖR, A RESILIENT

Csömör is the second largest village in Hungary, a traditional dead-end settlement.¹ The village, which was depopulated during the Ottoman occupation, was settled by

1 Reference to this study: Katalin Juhász: Food Heritage and Food Rituals as an Indispensable Element of Contemporary 'Crossover Folk Customs'. The Case of Csömör (Hungary). In Anikó Báti and Patricia Lysaght (eds.): *Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage*. Budapest: ELTE RCH Institute of Ethnology – Museum of Ethnography, 2025. pp. 367–384.

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Lutheran and Catholic Slovaks, and later by Catholic Germans from Budaörs, Pest County (Hungary).² From the late 19th century, the socio-ethnic composition of the population, which had by then doubled, changed radically, mainly because of those who moved there to reside, from Budapest. Many of the old calendar customs (e.g., carnival masquerade; Saint Lucia Day customs) were already being revived – from memory – in the 1930s.³ The proximity of the capital, Budapest, favoured bourgeois transformation, but a large part of the population held on to their old traditions.

In tri-ethnic Csömör, even socialism could not totally disrupt community life and social cohesion – there was always, for example, religious education in the schools, while the Catholic Germans never missed the preparation of the Corpus Christi processional street carpets made of flowers, and now other denominations and non-religious people join them in these processions.

And when, with the collapse of the socialist regime (1990), the previous cultural orientation determined from above ceased, and a local government independent of political parties was established, there was even more opportunity to apply local ideas and patterns in creating a renewed festive culture.⁴

2 The mass settlement of Slovaks and Germans in two-thirds of the country's territory (in settlements depopulated due to the Turkish occupation) was generally characteristic during the 18th century. For details of Slovak settlement, see: Gyivicsán, Anna: *Anyanyelv, kultúra, közösség. A magyarországi szlovákok* ('Mother tongue, culture, community. Slovaks in Hungary') (Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 1993). Regarding Csömör, see, with further references: Bati, Anikó – Juhász, Katalin – Zentai, Andrea and Vargha, Anita: 'Szlovák hagyományrekonstrukció és örökségesítés Csömörön' ('Heritagisation and the Reconstruction of Slovak Traditions in Csömör'), *Ethno-lore* 36 (2019), 81–122.

3 Gönyey Ébner, Sándor: 'A farsang hajdan és ma Csömörön' ('Carnival in the past and today in Csömör'), *Ethnographia* XLIII (1932), 28–29. <https://real-j.mtak.hu/17313/1/Ethnographia_1932_043.pdf> accessed 5 September 2023.

4 According to Pusztai and Schell, the genesis of the East European 'new wave of inventing traditions' is the result, first of all, of getting rid of the previous cultural orientation defined from above, and then after the institutions of local self-government were restored, the opportunity arose to apply local ideas and patterns in the creation of the renewed festivity culture. See, in this context, Pusztai, Bertalan: 'Das Schicksal der Kultur und des Lokalen in der postmodern Image Produktion' ('The Fate of Culture and the Local in Postmodern Image Production'), in Schell, Csilla ... Prosser-Schell, Michael and Pusztai, Bertalan eds.: *Re-Invention of Tradition in Ostmitteleuropa nach 1990: Neue, "gefundene" und revitalisierte Feste mit Schwerpunkt auf Ungarn* (Münster / New York: Waxmann, 2018), 21–38; Schell, Csilla: "Laßt uns eine Tradition machen!" Verdichtete Beobachtungen zur Wandlung des Festwesens und zum Phänomen der "Re-Invention of Tradition" nach der Wende in Ungarn. Ein Impulsbeitrag' ("Let's make a tradition!" Condensed observations on the transformation of festivities and the phenomenon of the "re-invention of tradition" after the fall of communism in Hungary. An inspirational contribution'), in Schell, Prosser-Schell, and Pusztai: *Re-Invention of Tradition in Ostmitteleuropa nach 1990: Neue, "gefundene" und revitalisierte Feste mit Schwerpunkt auf Ungarn*, 9–19.

Thus, the re-invention of local traditions that regained momentum after 1990 in former socialist regions of Eastern Europe, could be realised relatively soon in the case of Csömör. After the political regime-change, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) were formed one after another, and an extremely diverse traditional preservation activity developed in Csömör on the initiative of (community and individual) citizens. Private and public collections of folk costumes, local history relics (documents, photos, objects), and ethnographic objects were formed, as were minority organisations and folklore groups.⁵

The author of this study began fieldwork in Csömör in 2016 as part of the project 'Reetnographia 2' of the Hungarian Ethnographic Society and the Ethnographic Museum, Budapest. In addition, Anikó Bádi and myself have been studying and documenting various areas of Csömör's gastronomic culture since 2018 as part of different research projects.⁶ In this volume also we are both dealing with the food-heritage-related-activities of the Slovak tradition-preserving community in Csömör – though approaching it from a somewhat different perspective, respectively.⁷

One of the key findings of our previous research on cultural and social resilience is that Csömör's exceptionally high level of resilience is based on the social capital generated by the strength of its civil society. Since 1990, the population has doubled with people moving out of Budapest in order to reside in the Csömör area. According to a sociological survey in this context, most of the newcomers have integrated into the local society.

At local level, Csömör's representative body acting on behalf of its citizens, is not composed of political parties but of members of local NGOs. It is also important to note that, contrary to general trends, intangible and tangible cultural heritage is not primarily used for developing tourism, but rather for the building of community and the strengthening of local identity. As the mayor, István Fábri, emphasised: 'Csömör is a large municipality of 10,000 inhabitants, but we call it a village because of its

5 Bádi–Juhász–Zentai and Vargha: 'Szlovák hagyományrekonstrukció és örökségésítés Csömörön', 86–90.

6 2018–2024: 'The Social Embeddedness of the Public Catering of Children. Issues and Opportunities' (NKFH 128925); 2021: 'Social and Cultural Resilience in the Carpathian Basin' (ELKH–NTI); 2021–2023: 'Heritage Education, Cultural Memory, Identity' (ELKH–NTI SA-35/2021); 2022–2026: 'Heritage construction in contemporary community settings – Identity, Memory, Representation' (NKFH 143295).

7 See Anikó Bádi's study in this volume.

community life and traditions. If I were to sum up the two things that make us love living here, they are tradition and community.’

Thanks to the activity of local communities, cultural life in the settlement is vibrant and diverse: there is a settlement-level event almost every week, and, in addition to this, smaller-scale programmes are also organised on a daily basis. It is quite common for these programmes to include the sharing or the selling of various foods, and there are also many that are specifically gastronomic in nature.

The common preparation of meals by groups of friends, and the offering of homemade cakes and other delicacies to the entire village population, are key tools for community building in the settlement. And special emphasis is placed on food-heritage activities by the ‘Furmicska’ Association, based in the ‘House of Our Tót [Slovak] Traditions’.⁸

CONTEMPORARY (FOOD) HERITAGISATION

The Furmicska Association in Csömör is an excellent example of innovative contemporary heritagisation. Activities pertaining to it are not limited to preserving or reconstructing cultural heritage in an unaltered form, but feature rather both a reconstruction and a construction of traditions, with the aim of creating new and constantly-renewed traditions that successfully appeal to people.

Renewed tradition takes a ‘crossover approach’, combining both the local and the ‘imported’, and old and new elements. It is thus characteristic of contemporary heritagisation trends and practices, not only in music (where the term was first used), but also in other areas of culture.⁹ The Furmicska Association leader, Erzsébet Szabó, is not only passionately committed to preserving and continuing the Slovak traditions of Csömör, she is also – due to her good organisational and networking skills, and sufficient creativity – able to unite and successfully manage the

8 From the end of the 18th century until 1945, the folk name ‘Tót’ was officially used, which only acquired a pejorative meaning as a result of the Slovak national awakening in the 19th–20th centuries. Although the name ‘Slovak’ became established, the name ‘Tót’ still prevails among Slovaks in Hungary – see: Gyivicsán, Anna: *Anyanyelv, kultúra, közösség. A magyarországi szlovákok* (‘Mother tongue, culture, community. Slovaks in Hungary’) (Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 1993), 55.

9 The study of this contemporary heritagisation process is increasingly popular in Hungarian social and cultural studies. See: Eitler, Ágnes and Ament-Kovács, Bence eds.: ‘Polyphonic Perceptions of Heritage and Heritagization – Case Studies’, *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* 68/2 (2023).

Association as a whole.¹⁰ She instinctively applies the so-called 'design thinking' approach, which is:

both an agile tool and a way of thinking; a creative problem-solving process that proactively responds to the needs arising from the economic and social environment, using novel solutions. Its central element is, in addition, continuous connection with internal and external users and a primary focus on solutions.¹¹

By 'internal users' is meant the members of the Association (from children to adults), who, themselves, actively participate with their own ideas, while 'externals' are the visitors to or audience of the various programmes. Some of the latter have direct friendly/relative relationships with the Association members – thus forming a wider circle of stakeholders – and they regularly participate in the programmes. The other part consists of interested new residents of Csömör or visitors from nearby settlements.

The Slovak community organises almost a hundred events a year. Half of this count as various performances by dance groups. The other half (about fifty per year) are feastday 'traditions', seasonal household activities celebrated as community programmes (pig slaughtering, canning, harvesting), education (day care, courses, camps), and municipal events (e.g., 'Puff Pastry and Doughnut Festival at Shrovetide') – all of which are also occasions for cooking, eating together, and selling food.

The culinary part of the new 'folk traditions' of the Slovak traditionalists in Csömör, is not limited to just the preparation of selected dishes as it also includes appropriate food preparation and dining rituals, modes of hospitality and consumption, as well as scenery accessories and decorations that fit the occasion. These also reflect a crossover approach, design thinking, and (innovative) creativity. The cooking is done while wearing traditional costumes, and partly with traditional tools (authenticity), in a 'show kitchen', so that the public can follow the work live (performance). At the same time, modern techniques and tools are used in order to

10 About contemporary key actors in heritagisation, see Eitler, Ágnes: 'Towards the Analysis of Tradition-Based Projects of Locality: A Case Study from Rural Hungary', *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics* 16/1: 29–54. DOI: <<https://10.2478/jef-2022-0003>> accessed 5 August 2024.

11 Since the early 2000s, 'design thinking' has developed into one of the most influential approaches to foster creativity and innovation. For a review of this principle, with many references, see: Syed, Fahad – Shah, Sana Hafeez – Waseem, Zenab and Tariq, Adeel: 'Design Thinking for Social Innovation: A Systematic Literature Review & Future Research Directions. *Proceedings of 1st International Conference on Business, Management & Social Sciences (ICBMAS) 2021*, Available at SSRN: <https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3916835> accessed 5 August 2024.

prepare the large quantities of food partly for sale, and old traditional recipes are also adapted to today's needs and circumstances (innovation). Catering, and the sale of homemade food, represent an important source of financial support for the Association (profit-making management, sustainability).

In terms of food heritage, there are several types of events involving food-heritage elements (see the list below), but in most cases each event will include more than one aspect of food heritage.

Types of community food heritage events:

- old folk customs in a modern garb with food heritage elements
- new folk customs – community events with old and new foods
- community food-preparation as a traditional programme
- education
- hospitality, making and selling food

The activities of the Furmicska Association in Csömör clearly demonstrate that both the preservation, as well as the renewal, of traditions, are in dynamic interaction. In the following discourse, I present some selected activities of the Association based on ethnographic data, and I highlight how the aforementioned concepts are reflected in traditional recipes, food serving, communal dining, and economic practices.

OLD FOLK CUSTOMS IN MODERN GARB WITH FOOD HERITAGE ELEMENTS

Carnival tradition reconstruction

In the 1930s, the people of Csömör revived, from memory, the *carnival tradition of soliciting donations in masks*, at the request of the Hungarian ethnographer/collector, Sándor Gönyey (1886–1963), for photographic purposes. Based on the description provided about the event and the photographic record from 1931,¹² the custom was reconstructed in Csömör with the participation of schoolchildren, from

¹² For two photographic collections about carnival created by Sándor Gönyey Ébner in 1931, see: Gönyey Ébner, Sándor: 'A farsang hajdan és ma Csömörön' ('Carnival in the past and today in Csömör'), 28–29.

2022. Unlike how the old custom had operated, however, nowadays the masked team of schoolchildren goes, not to houses as was customary in the past, but to the school classrooms, where they collect food donations (both traditional and modern), from the pupils, and which they consume together in the afternoon.

All Saints' Day and the *Day of the Dead* are family holidays for the Slovak community of Csömör, when they visit the graves of their dead in the cemetery and remember them together. Traditionally, an 'evening meal' for the dead, consisting of wine, water, and pastry, was prepared as, according to traditional belief, dead family members visit the family home at night, during these holidays. To give the Slovak community a sense of national identity on this holiday, Erzsébet Szabó introduced a new 'folk custom' based on her own childhood memories. Every year since 2011, on All Saints' Eve, participants march to the cemetery (dressed in mourning), singing, carrying torches and candles, and remembering their Slovak ancestors next to graves with Slovak inscriptions, with prayers and wreaths (Fig. 2). Erzsébet talks about the old customs (children always listen to this with astonishment), and then the participants return to the 'House of Our Tót Traditions' for a modest buffet dinner (e.g., bread with lard, and pastries). In 2022, the All Saints' Day table, set with water and wine, was complemented with a traditional pastry, the *guglicska* ('walnut basket') in the 'Tót Kitchen', as a decoration (Fig. 3).

NEW FOLK CUSTOMS, COMMUNITY EVENTS WITH OLD AND NEW FOODS

The Ecumenical Prayer Service on 20th of August: Reinventing tradition through food

The ecumenical prayer service held on the 20th of August is largely a constructed tradition. The harvest wreath (once gifted by the harvesters to the landlord) is ceremonially presented to the mayor. Afterwards, the pastors of the different denominations and the choir hold a musical prayer service, consecrating the new bread, which is then distributed among those present. This is followed by a traditional meal prepared in the 'Tót Kitchen'.

The cooking brigade (in appropriate costume, of course) heats the oven at dawn and starts preparing the food. The new bread is traditionally baked in the oven by a married couple. The menu always includes rooster soup with liver-bread dumplings.



Fig. 1. Masked team of Slovak schoolchildren with food-donations in the school, Csömör, 2022. The foods in the wicker basket, are: home-made sausages, apples, store-bought pretzels, and oatmeal crackers. (Photo: 'Vargosz', Csömör, 2022)



Fig. 2. All Saints' Day ceremony in the cemetery, Csömör, 2022. (Photo by Péter Klacsán, Csömör, 2022)



Fig. 3. All Saints' Day decoration in the 'Tót Kitchen', Csömör, 2022. (Photo by Péter Klacsán, Csömör, 2022)



Fig. 4. The menu after 20th August ceremony: rooster soup with liver-bread dumplings, stuffed cabbage, and dessert (different pastries). (Photo by Katalin Juhász, Csömör, 2024)

The latter element consists of a paste of spicy chicken liver with breadcrumbs and eggs, which is now cooked in the soup, no longer wrapped in a tea towel, but stuffed into a plastic casing. Fig. 4 shows how it is prepared and served: the dumplings are cut into rings and served with the cooked meat and root vegetables. The soup is served with homemade pasta ('rotini'), which is also made here. The second course is stuffed cabbage. This is followed by a variety of pastries (Fig. 4). In the past, many people would bring a plate of pastries to these get-togethers. In the last 10 years, however, the organisers have specialised the various activities – the different tasks involved in preparing the traditional meal are now assigned to specific individuals/volunteers. Thus, some cook, others serve or sell, and still others make pastries.

This event is actually a multi-constructed tradition,¹³ which creates a specific community identity by reinterpreting old elements according to the current needs of the community. The symbolic gesture of the harvest wreath is now directed towards the mayor (the main 'owner' of the village as its highest-ranking leader), while the ecumenical prayer-hour, and the blessing of the new bread, have become a multicultural ceremony by integrating several religious traditions into it.

The creative recontextualisation of ritual elements makes them accessible and meaningful in a modern, pluralistic setting. Innovation is expressed in the combination of religious and secular symbolism, bridging cultural and generational divides.

This adaptation procedure reflects a practical innovation¹⁴ aligned with design-thinking principles: problem-solving based on context, user needs, and available resources. The communal sharing of the blessed bread, and the ritual of eating together, also function as integration mechanisms as new residents can eat traditional foods at a common table with the local inhabitants, thus forming a food community which contributes to social cohesion (Fig. 5).¹⁵

13 The forgotten 18th century tradition of presenting a harvest wreath was re-established by the Minister of Agriculture, Ignác Darányi, in of 1901. In the 1930s, it was first linked to the Saints Peter and Paul Day (29 June) and the blessing of new bread, and then to the feast of Saint Stephen on 20 August. The communist regime stripped 20 August of its sacred content and declared it to be the feast of the constitution ('Day of the Constitution') and new bread. After the change of regime (1989–1990), it again became the feast of Saint Stephen and the feast of the blessing of new bread; see: Kovács, Ákos: *A kitalált hagyomány* ('The Invented Tradition') (Pozsony: Kalligram, 2006). Cf. Hobsbawm, Eric and Ranger, Terence eds.: *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

14 Brown, Tim: *Change by design: How design thinking creates new alternatives for business and society* (New York: Harper Business, 2009).

15 Douglas, Mary: 'Deciphering a meal', *Daedalus* 101/11 (1972), 61–81.



Fig. 5. Blessing and sharing the bread and 'Love hospitality' (agape) after the prayer service, for every participant. VIP guests and other actors are in the big hall (inside), and the wider audience is outside. (Photo: 'Vargosz', Csömör, 2024)

The example of the rooster soup clearly demonstrates creative adaptation to technological changes: the use of artificial casings instead of traditional tea towels contributes to the more efficient, standardised preparation of the dish, while, at the same time, preserving its authentic nature. In terms of work organisation, appropriate division and the specialisation of tasks, make the implementation of the event more efficient. All of these solutions clearly reflect the design-thinking principle of ‘practical innovation’¹⁶ (even if the actors themselves are not aware of this): the needs of the users and the circumstances drive the change.

OCCASIONS FOR COMMUNAL COOKING

The Gingerbread Village: Creating a new community tradition

A special occasion for preparing food communally is the building of a *gingerbread village* before Christmas. The trend of building gingerbread villages emerged in Hungary in the early 2000s.¹⁷ The first gingerbread village was built in Csömör in 2016 by members of the Furmicska Association, on the initiative of Erzsébet Szabó and based on her designs. Since then, the ‘Our Sweet Little Village’ project has become an increasingly-elaborate Christmas event. The realistic village layout includes churches, public buildings, shops, houses, and even a railway station.

The baking of the gingerbread, based on a special recipe, starts at the end of November, and involves most of the Association members, both children and adults alike. The finished model is displayed in the ‘House of Our Tót Traditions’ and is seen by many.

In recent years, the exhibition, which has been enriched with many other elements (a life-size nativity scene in a courtyard, Christmas figures, a Christmas interior in a country house, mobile retro toys, and illuminated decorations next to the gingerbread village), attracts mainly local and regional visitors (with children), but has also gained national fame.

¹⁶ Hobsbawm and Ranger: *The Invention of Tradition*.

¹⁷ The history of gingerbread villages and towns in Europe and Hungary is summarised by: Juhász, Katalin: ‘Hagyománykonstrukció, örökségképzés: közösségi mézeskalácsfalu-építés mint új karácsonyi “népszokás”’ (“Tradition construction, heritage formation: community gingerbread village building as a new Christmas “folk custom””), *FolkMAGazin* 29/6 (2022), 42–45.



Fig. 6. 'Our Sweet Village': The realistic village layout made from gingerbread, includes more than 200 objects made from: 70 kg flour, 20 kg powdered sugar, 20 kg honey, 120 eggs, 6 kg margarine, and 2 cartons of mixed spice. (Photo by Péter Klacsán, Csömör, 2019)

The exhibition is free to visit, but revenue generation has also been creatively solved: self-made Christmas-tree decorations, gingerbread, souvenirs, and also homemade jams, preserves, smoked sausage and bacon, as well as lard and greaves made during the November communal pig-slaughtering, are sold, all of which are in high demand. The 'Tót Kitchen',¹⁸ where visitors can buy hot tea, mulled wine, pancakes, 'görhöny' (traditional Slovak potato pie), and other usual delicacies, is also open for business on weekends.

After the holidays, the gingerbread buildings are auctioned off and the money used to support the Association. There were also times when the makers divided the pieces among themselves.

The trend of building gingerbread villages is also a good example of the phenomenon called – after Eric Hobsbawm – 'invented tradition', for which the term 'heritage construction' is more commonly used nowadays. While the old Advent-Christmas dramatic folk customs are being transformed into stage, kindergarten-school, and residential community 'programmes', and also into 'events' within the framework of folklorism, the needs of today for the strengthening of communities, are thought to be best served by the creation of new traditions – that successfully appeal to modern people and establish them in their own environment – such as is evident in the exhibition and fair in Csömör.

The gingerbread-village building is a new type of community practice originally adopted from outside, which the members of the Association have filled with local content and meaning. This is a good example of creating a completely new community tradition for a traditional holiday, which allows for individual creativity alongside repetitive elements, and which helps to raise awareness of the value of the local built heritage, thereby strengthening identity.

For newcomers, the gingerbread project provides an inclusive, low-threshold opportunity for integration, allowing them to engage creatively and collaboratively without requiring prior expertise in local/Slovak traditions. From a design-thinking perspective, the project represents an iterative, collaborative process,¹⁹ evolving each year with new additions and refinements based on participant feedback.

¹⁸ About the 'Tót Kitchen', see also Anikó Báti's study of in this volume.

¹⁹ Brown: *Change by Design: How Design Thinking Transforms Organizations and Inspires Innovation*; Liedtka, Jeanne: 'Why design thinking works', *Harvard Business Review* 96/5 (2018), 72–79.

CONCLUSIONS

Among the many activities of the Slovak community of Csömör, the examples presented here clearly show that local traditional foods, and their joint preparation and consumption, are given special emphasis in all of the community's programmes. They creatively and innovatively incorporate selected elements of food heritage into their most diverse programmes.

The leader of the Slovak community, Erzsébet Szabó (a gardener and a florist by training), plans and manages all of the community events, most of which are performative (linked to calendar festivals and agriculture), including 'sets', costumes, the 'script' and its implementation, as well as PR-marketing communication, and the sale of home-made products.

Erzsébet is able to unite and manage the community, as she is a good organiser, has the necessary network capital, and is appropriately creative in both obtaining funding and devising programmes and projects. One of the secrets of her success is design thinking (this is increasingly used in business and event planning), the essence of which is to understand and serve current 'consumer' needs, leaving room for innovation and new developments. This design-thinking principle can be found in every aspect of the Association's operations, and its members apply it instinctively, without ever having heard of it.

Through communal cooking, eating, and the reinterpretation of recipes, food becomes a medium for transmitting collective memory and place-based identity. The tangible acts of preparing and sharing traditional dishes symbolically tie participants to the locality's Slovak heritage, while also creating an inclusive identity open to new interpretations and participants. In this way, food heritage acts as a dynamic cultural practice that anchors community identity even amid demographic and social change.

This an isolated case, but according to the data, an analogical practice is common in the whole country: food heritage is a prominent feature in heritage conservation everywhere, a central object of community programmes and festivals, and its presentation can be implemented in many different ways. There are many communities similar to those in Csömör, in Hungary, where traditions are being preserved, reconstructed, retaught, and revitalised in similar complex ways, thereby meeting today's needs.

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EKATERINA PROTASSOVA, MARIA YELENEVSKAYA

RUSSOPHONE IMMIGRANT FOODWAYS AS MARKERS OF CULTURAL ADAPTATION AND HYBRID IDENTITIES

ABSTRACT

In social media, Russophone immigrants in different countries discuss their favourite foods for New Year, their fusion recipes and the psychological functions of the traditional festive dishes which they cook when they are away from home. These discussions reveal that food is a powerful trigger of predominantly positive nostalgia.

INTRODUCTION

The critical importance¹ of the senses for ethnographic and cultural studies was emphasised by Edward T. Hall who remarked that people from different cultures do not just speak different languages but ‘inhabit different sensory worlds.’² Indeed, these differences are strongly represented in sensory metaphors. Every linguo-culture has its own sensory metaphors related to taste which are used to convey meaning through evocative sensory referents.³ The Russian language shares some of these sensory metaphors with other linguo-cultures. These are biblical metaphors, such as ‘salt of the Earth’ (Matthew 5:13), and ‘sweet’ as the marker of things that make one happy and satisfied, and, conversely, ‘bitter’ as the marker of unhappiness, disappointment and even anger or hatred. On the other hand, Russian has its own expressions which extend perceptions of taste to other realms – e.g., the verb *nasladit'sia* (‘to delight in something’) is derived from *sladkii* ‘sweet’, *kisnut* (‘to

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2 Hall, Edward T.: *The Hidden Dimension* (New York: Doubleday, 1966).

3 Classen, Constance: ‘Foundations for an anthropology of the senses,’ *International Social Science Journal* 49/153 (1997), 401–412.

sour') means to be sad, gloomy and passive, and *peresolit'* ('to use too much salt') denotes 'overdoing something,' while *nasolit' komu-to* ('to treat someone to salt') means to 'spite or to do a bad turn to someone.' The phraseological unit *ne solono khlebavshi* ('without gulping any salt') emerged in the period when salt was expensive and difficult to get in Russia and it is used when one talks about futile efforts or failures to achieve a goal. The saying *nedosol na stole, peresol na spine* ('not enough salt on the table leads to too much salt on the back') implies that excessive economy may be punished. 'Salty' jokes, stories, maxims, and so on, denote something which is witty while being indecent or politically incorrect. The adjective *gor'kii* 'bitter' combines with nouns, such as, for example, 'fate,' 'grief,' 'irony,' 'defeat,' 'separation,' 'loss,' 'disappointment,' 'remorse,' 'experience,' or 'reproach' to denote unhappiness. Finally, *naest'sia* means not only to eat enough, to be full, but also to be fed up with something unpleasant. These, and other sensory metaphors, are widely used in informal Russian-language and media discourse. Interestingly, with the exception of 'bitter,' most other sensory metaphors related to taste do not have stable value sememes and may have either positive or negative connotations.

Moreover, there is a large corpus of metaphors in the Russian language that make use of the names of different foods. The dictionary of Russian food metaphors shows that those foods that have been staples of Russian cuisine for centuries, are particularly rich in producing symbolic meanings. A case in point is *kasha*, a cereal cooked in water or milk, that has produced three stable language metaphors – heavy and dirty wet snow, confusion of ideas, facts and events, and turmoil in a military or political situation. The noun is also used in various phraseological phrases, such as *kasha v golove* ('cereal in the head'), referencing an inability to sort out knowledge to find useful information; *zavarit' kashu* ('to start cooking cereal'), meaning to start a difficult project without hopes of success; *kasha vo rtu* ('cereal in the mouth'), referring to unclear and incomprehensible speech; *kasha vo rtu stynet* ('cereal gets cold in the mouth'), about a slow and dim person; (*s nim*) *kashi ne svarish'* ('you cannot cook cereal with him'), meaning that you cannot reach an agreement or have a joint project with him; and *malo kashi el* ('he didn't eat enough cereal'), referring to a physically weak person.⁴

Notably, these metaphors are used by residents of Russia and by Russophone immigrants in the diaspora. In our sample of texts, immigrants' conversations about

4 Yurina, Elena and Borovkova, Anastasia: 'Precedent figurative words and expressions in the dictionary of Russian food metaphors,' *Journal of Lexicography* 1/7 (2015), 36–51.

their food nostalgia are interspersed with food idioms and sayings, such as: *gde kasha, tam i nashi* ('you'll find ours where cereals are'), *shchi da kasha pishcha nasha* ('cabbage soup and cereals are our foods'), and *kashu maslom ne isportish'* ('you won't spoil a cereal by adding butter'). Such phrases have cultural connotations beyond their literal meanings, reflecting the traditional significance attached to food.

These, and other examples, confirm that taste is inseparable from smell, touch, vision and hearing; in other words, that all of these senses interact with each other and can be cognitively and psychologically unified.⁵ Moreover, food is related to intellectual and emotional spheres of human life, and food metaphors help us to make sense of the environment and to make value judgments: "[...] the senses are far from innocent; they are a situated practice that can shed light on the way bodies experience different spaces of culture".⁶

In this paper, we explore food traditions of New Year celebrations and discuss attitudes towards some popular dishes commonly found in Russian-speaking emigrant communities. Online ethnography applies ethnographic principles to digital settings, evolving since the 1990s to study virtual, hybrid, or cross-cultural communities across disciplines, using richly contextualised, interpretive approaches to explore technology-mediated cultures.⁷ It should be borne in mind, however, that traditional recipes often have to incorporate local ingredients and tastes while striving to maintain the essence of nostalgic flavours and cooking methods. Cooking these dishes at home helps to pass family traditions down to the younger generations in emigrant communities.

RUSSOPHONE NEW YEAR FOOD CELEBRATIONS AND OLIVIER SALAD

Usually before Christmas and New Year, Russophone diasporans discuss in face-to-face conversations and on different internet platforms, where to buy their traditional festive foods – proper herring and pickled cucumbers, cold cuts and caviar and what is used for the filling of the *pirozhki*. Can one find them in local grocery stores, or

5 Auvray, Malika and Spence, Charles: 'The multisensory perception of flavor', *Consciousness and Cognition* 17/3 (2008), 1016–1031.

6 Law, Lisa: 'Home cooking: Filipino women and geographies of the senses in Hong Kong', *Ecumene* 8/3 (2001), 266.

7 Dawson, Catherine: *A-Z of Digital Research Methods* (London: Routledge, 2019), 248–254.

does one have to go to Russian/Latvian/Estonian shops importing foods from the post-Soviet space. On 23 December 2023, food blogger, Gulnara Galeeva, a Moscow native living in Antibes, France, wrote a text entitled, 'Longing for *Olivier* Salad' (quoted here with the author's permission). She claimed that:

in emigration, nostalgia for simple childhood things intensifies. Tell me, who would dream of salted mackerel, 'herring under a fur coat' [*shuba* salad]⁸ or *Olivier* salad, if living in Moscow? Tap a few buttons on an app, and within half an hour, a courier is at your door with a plastic container of any salad, thoughtfully packed with napkins and disposable utensils.⁹

In Antibes where she settled, Galeeva faced a plethora of choices at the chilled 'Russian' supermarket displays and deli section, where variations of familiar dishes, crafted by diligent entrepreneurs, filled the shelves. Options ranged from vegan to halal, hypoallergenic to 100% natural, with or without mayonnaise, and featuring diverse foods such as sausages labelled 'approved by the state', *Antonovka* apples, shrimps, farm chicken, boiled tongue, salmon, freshly caught tuna, pomegranates, and delicately boiled eggs from free-range hens. Confronted with such a dizzying variety of foods, and while checking expiration dates, her tired brain often defaulted to autopilot. Returning home from a supermarket dairy section with *ryazhenka* (a traditional fermented milk product), cottage cheese, and butter, she occasionally realised that she had forgotten to buy a salad. The convenience of pre-cooked options – which others had meticulously prepared and seasoned, and with every 100 grams priced at just 1 euro – sometimes overshadowed the appeal of the homemade. During the festive season, visits to friends or relatives in Russian cities usually meant being treated to various appetisers called salads, aspic, pies and stuffed poultry, with leftovers packaged for the guests to take home. This tradition of hospitality was not abandoned after migration. Delis stocked traditional treats such as honey cake, cookies with condensed milk, pastries in the shape of potatoes made of biscuits crushed into crumbs and mixed with chocolate or cocoa and butter, *syrniki* (curd fritters), and grandma's pies, while thoughtful colleagues often shared their own homemade delights. Despite having spent a decade away from Moscow, Galeeva had never prepared traditional New Year dishes herself, as they were always readily available from Russophone émigré caterers. In general terms, however, living in France presented a different culinary adventure involving the seeking out of foods

8 'Herring under a fur coat', also known as *shuba*, is a traditional Russian appetiser made of layers of herring, vegetables, egg, and mayonnaise.

9 This and the following excerpts from internet posts were translated by the authors.

reminiscent of home – perfect herring and raw beets in neighboring towns, splurging on familiar gingerbread, and hunting for cucumbers evocative of her childhood.

Summers in France posed other challenges – like finding radishes for *okroshka* – a cold soup in which *kvas*, a bread-based fermented drink, is added to a mixture of boiled meat and potatoes, hard-boiled eggs, cucumbers, spring onions, dill and parsley – or dealing with disappointing locally-grown cucumbers, which led her to grow her own on the terrace. Being in France ensured that there was no shortage of eggs, though selecting the right boiled sausage required careful deliberation and considerable expense. Her children began to favour sausage purchased for omelettes over ham and prosciutto, while she still searched for her ideal yogurt and even invested in a soda machine for sparkling water. The absence of smoked mackerel prompted her to craft an *Olivier* salad. Gathering tender peas, reliable sausage, and pickles marinated according to her mother's recipe, she added walnuts and a tangy Canadian apple, resulting in a dish devoured eagerly by her children. Despite planning a feast with a young farm rooster stuffed with Corsican oranges, she served a generous portion of nougat and raspberry ice cream which unexpectedly stole the show.

Galeeva's post received 1.5k likes and 719 comments. Russophone diasporans from all over the world compared the names they applied to similar dishes and ingredients that they could buy in their local shops, and the poor or successful recipe replacements which they made. Modifications of traditional recipes were proposed, e.g.:

This year, I made a healthier version of *Olivier* salad, using duck and avoiding any pro-inflammatory ingredients. The recipe included boiled duck, fermented or pickled cucumbers (but not in vinegar), sweet potato, chicken eggs (or quail eggs for those with autoimmune issues), avocado, onions, green peas (without added sugar), and optionally, boiled carrots. For the dressing, I used mayonnaise made from purified butter. My husband said it was the best he'd ever had, and judging by how quickly the bowl was emptied in two sittings, I believe him!¹⁰

In relation to *Olivier* salad, there are people who question the right to call anything *Olivier*, other than what was traditionally prepared. As always, there are those who matter-of-factly remind the audience of the pre-1917 (pre-Bolshevik revolution) classic recipe; but this implied reproach remains ignored. The assortment of foods

10 Although these excerpts appeared in public groups, we anonymise their authors and do not provide any demographic data in order to make them unrecognisable.

in the 'Russian' shops is praised. Most discussions are centred around the sort of meat to use, and how to cook it; how to make, or where to get, the best mayonnaise, and whether or not to include an apple in *Olivier* salad. Participant A mentioned that although they had the option of including quail and crab in a traditional *Olivier* salad, the emotional memory of childhood is strong. While her husband, who is a chef, will prepare a culinary masterpiece with aspic, caviar, and quail for the guests, she will be happy with the Soviet sausage version. For her, the taste is tied to emotional memories rather than to just flavour. Participant B agreed with these sentiments but expressed a personal dislike for calling the salad with sausage *Olivier*, while the version with meat is part of her childhood memory. Commentator C observed that historically, society was divided into those who used sausage and those who used beef or chicken in *Olivier*, hinting at a subtle snobbery from the Soviet past. Nowadays, anyone can afford any version of the salad, as there are no longer food shortages, but there is a scarcity of simplicity, warmth, and tolerance of different tastes. D shared her experience of living in rural Mexico, with limited product-variety, for four years, and of how they miss simple foods from home that are unavailable there. They made *Olivier* once but did not repeat the adventure; instead, they rediscovered 'herring under a fur coat' – *shuba* salad. Without access to herring, they used canned tuna and found it even tastier. Nowadays, they roast vegetables in foil instead of boiling them, which enhances the flavour, and they make their own mayonnaise – thus relying on creativity and local ingredients to make delicious dishes.

Emotional and nostalgic sides of food preparation and reminiscences from childhood ('my mother/grandmother has done it this way, that is why I like it') are frequently displayed online. One participant asks how *Olivier* is made, which triggers a storm because other participants cannot believe one could be so inexperienced:

My husband is asking for (demanding!) *Olivier* salad. I have never made it in my life. For me, it's like climbing Everest. And I need to choose the right sausage too. My husband wants to stand and chop all the ingredients together! With 'The Irony of Fate' [a cult love story movie by Ryazanov], playing in the background. He wants to experience the happiness of [us] cooking together and then eating together. I've never made *Olivier* salad. I don't even know which cucumbers, sausages, and peas to use. My husband's friends are very suspicious of me, calling me a 'Western plant'. There are many things I don't know, I haven't tried, or seen. I didn't even know what 'herring under a fur coat' was, or had ever tried it. My husband scratched his head and gave me a pass on the herring, but he's adamant about *Olivier*! 'In what part of the USSR did you grow up not to inherit love for mayonnaise salads? Moldova, perhaps?' Well [...] I don't know

what to say: either it's nostalgia or old age setting in. And the main thing is, we are in Spain right now, there's so much delicious Spanish food to enjoy!

Participants from Moldova protested that she must be joking about Moldova, because here, everyone always made, and still makes *Olivier*, they said, as well as 'herring under a fur coat', Mimosa salad, and so on, and these dishes have spread to Romania, where they were previously unknown. Traditionally, mayonnaise was not common in Moldavian cuisine, but it adopted trends from Ukrainian, Russian, and Jewish cuisines. E writes: 'We have been living in Europe for 20 years, but we don't change our traditions. Our menu is Georgian.'

In the blog entitled 'Russophone France', posts claim that French people like everything that is not mass-produced but rather cooked 'by hand'. F was fed up hearing praise of old Soviet food habits. She is convinced that if you move to another country, you should embrace its cuisine and traditions. She has been living in France for 30 years, and on the New Year's Eve, her family and friends have champagne and oysters, along with some other delicacies. The festive dinner is usually from 8.00 p.m. to 9.00 p.m., and then everyone goes to bars to dance and drink, having a great time. She admonishes group members to 'finally learn to live in a civilised manner'. Some participants agree with her, but G finds it strange that someone who is clearly 'uncivilised' should presume to teach others how to become civilised instead of learning the French culture of polite communication. Other participants ask rhetorical questions: ['Why] get rid of childhood memories?' ['Why] abandon your traditions?' 'Are you seriously considering depriving yourself of such pleasure?' 'Why get rid of things you love?'

In a multilingual and multicultural world, this is similar to the question often asked by Russian-speaking parents: 'How do you handle the issue of Santa (or his equivalent) and the Russian *Ded Moroz* ('Grandfather Frost')?' Specifically, when, and by whom, are the gifts brought and how do you explain this to your children? Parents with small children usually talk about *Ded Moroz*, read books, and attend holiday parties. Yet, customs differ in bi-ethnic and monoethnic families. In these, they may also serve different dishes for Christmas following local traditions but then cook other dishes, in the Soviet tradition, for a New Year feast.



Fig. 1. A shop in Varna, Bulgaria (2024). Traditional post-Soviet salads and other dishes.
(Photo by the authors)

RUSSOPHONES' PASSION FOR BUCKWHEAT

On the Russian segment of the internet, discussions as to which foods Russian émigrés miss most, are to be found. Almost all of them mention buckwheat. Historically, buckwheat was cultivated in different parts of the Russian empire, including Altay and Siberia. The proverb *grechnevaia kasha – matushka nasha, a khlebets rzhanoi – otec nash rodnoi* ('buckwheat is our dear mother, and rye bread is our own father') suggests that it was one of the staple foods of the people. In Soviet times, buckwheat cultivation endured periods of both good and bad luck – the latter, when zigzags in agricultural policy drastically reduced the lands allocated to the growing of buckwheat by replacing it with other plants, thereby eventually causing it to be added to the list of foods in short supply. In many areas of the Soviet Union, in the late 1970s and in the 1980s, buckwheat was freely available only for people suffering from diabetes. Others considered themselves lucky if they managed to buy this cereal after queueing for its purchase. It is noteworthy that, at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, when people were afraid that there would be food shortages, buckwheat was among the first foods to be sold out.¹¹ While in the past, the popularity of buckwheat was explained by it being undemanding in terms of its cultivation (it does not require rich soils or fertilising), and it was inexpensive, today's people rate it highly for its nutritional value.

Discussions focusing on the best ways to cook buckwheat and suggestions about how to serve it, illustrate its popularity among the Russophone diaspora. We find many different recipes in blogs and in online culinary forums in this connection. Someone even started a Facebook community entitled *Grechnevaya kasha* ('Buckwheat porridge'). We will now analyse two Facebook discussions about buckwheat that appeared in a public group whose members post their favourite recipes, exchange cooking tips, and ask top contributors for culinary advice. The first discussion followed a post in which a participant described her way of cooking buckwheat. All the commentators mention that they love buckwheat. Some agree that the posted recipe is reliable, but others suggest modifications, including preparing buckwheat without thermal processing, by just soaking it in hot water. In describing the process of preparation, some mention that when the water evaporates, they wrap the pot containing the buckwheat in newspapers, and then put it under pillows or blankets to keep it warm for several hours. Nobody is shocked by such a

11 Lokalov, Artiom: 'Do you like buckwheat? I love it!' *Rodina* <<https://rodina-history.ru/2020/03/26/pochemu-grechka-by-la-i-ostaetsia-glavnoj-antikrizisnoj-krupoj-na-rusi.html>> accessed 26 October 2024.

peculiar utilisation of the public press, and one of the users of such a method even remarks that it is the only reason why she keeps newspapers in the house. Some commentators refer to recipes ‘tested for years, passed from generation to generation,’ and some mention that they cook buckwheat exactly like their mothers, fathers and grandmothers, did. Clearly, it is important for these commentators to continue family traditions even when they are far from their mother country. In the description of the results of cooking buckwheat, we find characteristics, such as ‘beautiful,’ ‘velvety’ and ‘with creamy taste,’ ‘soft and tender,’ and ‘fluffy,’ mentioned – all of them pointing to a positive evaluation of the dish.

The second discussion thread we chose for analysis started with a provocative question: ‘Can buckwheat be tasty? What is the secret?’ Indeed, a few commentators said they did not like buckwheat. One participant claims that ‘to make buckwheat tasty, you have to have eaten it since childhood.’ Some say that they like it only with milk and sugar, while others agree that they eat it only in combination with stewed vegetables, or with meat and vegetables or by adding onions and mushrooms to it. But most of the discussants are buckwheat enthusiasts: “Buckwheat is always tasty!”; “It cannot fail to be tasty”; “It’s my favourite cereal!!!”; ‘It is tasty even without any additions’; ‘Boiled buckwheat with butter, one can eat it even at night’. Moreover, some claim they would be happy to eat it every day.

Some commentators describe their innovations, such as mixing buckwheat with other cereals, or with fish, making it the basis of a cold appetiser with vegetables, or with dried fruit and cranberries. Some say that they replace rice with buckwheat to make *pilaf* or use buckwheat instead of pasta in the dish known as *makarony po-flotski* (‘navy style pasta’). When a suggested modification of the traditional dish sounds appealing, commentators express their surprise: ‘Imagine this! I would never invent such a thing! I’ll try [it]!’, or they ask for a more detailed description alluding to a formula of a TV ‘Brain Ring’: ‘Recipe to the studio’ please’, which has become a speech cliché. Only one commentator expresses her disapproval of a recipe violating the ‘canon’ by saying that it caused a ‘cultural shock’.

Several participants draw attention of the discussants to the health benefits of buckwheat and its value for weight-watchers – “for those who follow healthy nutritional rules, it’s simply a treasure”. In this discussion thread, there are also references to the recipes learned from parents and grandparents, and which are viewed as family traditions to be valued and preserved. There is also a nostalgic allusion to the past: “Since my childhood, I’ve loved buckwheat with butter and milk

sausages (a brand of sausages made from boiled beef and pork and mixed with eggs and milk), like those they sold in the USSR¹².” Another participant responds ironically: “It is still very tasty today, even after the USSR, happily, collapsed.”

In describing their love for buckwheat, some participants are emotional, and use: ‘love’ and ‘adore,’ in this context. “When I first found buckwheat here, I was as happy as a child,” says one participant. And another one exclaims, *Grechka forever!* (‘Buckwheat forever!’) We also see the idiomatic expressions, *menia za ushi ne ottaschish’* – literally, ‘one cannot tear me away from this food even by pulling me by my ears’ – which implies that some food is irresistible, and *otpad bashki* (‘jaw dropping’) with a similar inference. Finally, to express their emotions, participants also use multiple exclamation marks.

CONCLUSION

In Russophone diaspora communities, holiday meals, and particularly the iconic *Olivier* salad, serve as emotional touchstones that connect émigrés to cherished traditions and childhood memories. Conversations among diaspora members highlight the careful sourcing of ingredients, creative substitutions, and nostalgia-fuelled modifications, underscoring the central role of familiar dishes in maintaining cultural continuity. Despite an array of culinary options in their host countries, many immigrants still yearn for the flavours and customs of their homeland. This longing also extends to other Russian staples, such as buckwheat, the preparation and presentation of which reflect deep-seated family traditions and cultural pride. Through these discussions, diasporic communities not only share culinary tips but also reinforce a collective identity. While some advocate for integration into local customs, others see retaining these traditions as essential, with recipes often modified to suit individual preferences or local availability, blending memories of the past with the realities of the present.

12 USSR: The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (The Soviet Union), 1922–1991. <<https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&q=ussr>> accessed 26 November 2024.



Fig. 2. A shop in Budapest, Hungary (2024). Sunflower seeds and buckwheat from Ukraine, Russia and Germany. (Photo by the authors)

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ZSOLT SZILÁGYI

FROM *GERIIN BUUZ* TO FINE DINING

The Changes in Mongolian Food Culture from the 1990s to the Present

ABSTRACT

Mongolian food culture has changed radically in the last thirty years. During this period, Mongolia experienced significant cultural and social changes and the era of political opening up and economic changes also took place, in parallel with the worldwide process of globalisation. Explosive urbanisation undoubtedly left its mark on the everyday life of the Mongols, including their eating habits. The changes in food culture clearly shows how Mongolians integrate into the globalised cultural environment, and, at the same time, an opposite process can be observed – one which emphasises certain elements of traditional culture and makes them symbols of national self-representation.

INTRODUCTION

The Inner Asian nomads were never characterised by a high gastronomic culture.¹ The nomadic lifestyle does not allow for a varied diet, as the available raw materials are limited. Animal foods – meat and dairy products – are essential dietary elements, while only a few grain products and vegetables are available seasonally. Spices, with the exception of salt, were almost completely absent. They use only rudimentary kitchen utensils and the cooking technology is limited to the basic levels of boiling, steaming, and, less often, frying. In traditional nomadic circumstances, the aspects of practicality, efficiency, and easy and quick preparation were of primary importance

1 Reference to this study: Zsolt Szilágyi: From *Geriin Buuz* to Fine Dining. The Changes in Mongolian Food Culture from the 1990s to the Present. In Anikó Báti and Patricia Lysaght (eds.): *Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage*. Budapest: ELTE RCH Institute of Ethnology – Museum of Ethnography, 2025. pp. 399–413.
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in the food-making process. This article aims to present examples of changes in Mongolian food culture, and the process by which certain Mongolian ‘national’ dishes have become important elements of a Mongolian memory policy consciously constructed in recent years.

The experiences presented in this paper come from different parts of Mongolia, such as the Gobi Desert, Eastern (Khentii and Dornod aimags) and Western (Bulgan, Arkhangai, Övörkhangai, Uvs, Khovd aimags, etc.) parts of Mongolia, as well as Khövsgöl County in the north, and places ranging from the capital city Ulaanbaatar, to small towns in the countryside. The examples in this article are drawn from my experiences in Mongolia during annual field-research visits since 1992, during which I lived with different nomadic families, participated as an honorary guest in a child’s haircutting celebration,² and celebrated the Lunar New Year (*Tsagaan Sar*).

On these research fieldwork visits conducted over more than thirty years, I could observe the changes occurring in the eating habits and the taste perceptions of the Mongolian people and also how city and country life diverged in this regard. I noted how traditional nomadic foods became mass-produced products, and again how they created craft products of a guaranteed high quality. I could also discern how the Mongolians adapted to international cuisine with Korean, Japanese, Chinese or European foods becoming an integral part of everyday life, and how some nomadic dishes became symbols of traditional Mongolian culture in a world made uniform by globalisation. Or, how they became fine dining brands conjuring up ‘national’ symbols.³

2 The hair-cutting ceremony is one of the most important family celebration, usually taking place when the child is 3–5 years old, and this is when they receive their name. Batsaikhan, J. – Lkhagvadorj, Ts.-E. and WuDong QiMuGe (Odonchimeg): ‘Keeping the Hair-cutting Ceremony in the Context of Mongolia and Inner Mongolia’, *Nomadic Studies* 31. *Nomads, Ethnicity and Intercultural Dialogue*. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/372946254_Keeping_the_Child_Hair_Cutting_Ceremony_in_the_Context_of_Mongolia_and_Inner_Mongolia> accessed 19 February 2025.

3 <<https://www.naadam.com.au/post/the-great-influence-of-mongolian-cuisine-how-dumplings-spread-across-eurasiaintroduction>> accessed 13 November 2024.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Since 1990, Mongolia has undergone economic, cultural and social change at an unprecedented pace.⁴ This was also the era of political opening up, and economic changes took place in parallel with the worldwide process of globalisation.⁵

While the structures of a traditional nomadic lifestyle are apparently disintegrating under the effects of the new political and economic environment, two distinct social groups have gradually emerged in Mongolian society in this context. In Mongolian cities – and primarily in the capital – one group is living an entirely settled lifestyle adapted to urban economic circumstances, and this includes those who increasingly see living abroad (not necessarily in an ‘urban’ setting) as a means of achieving their existential goals. Their aim is to settle and work in Asian countries – mainly South Korea and Japan – with better economic conditions. China is a less attractive destination, partly due to prejudices – observable mostly in Chinese cities – arising from misinterpreted national consciousness, historical tradition and nationalism, despite the fact that a significant Mongolian minority can already be found living in the Chinese territories bordering on Mongolia. I will return to this special issue later in this article.⁶

A very large number of young people living in Mongolian cities are following a new trajectory which diverges completely from the traditional Mongolian model. For them, the fashion, music and lifestyle dictated by the global culture of the United States or by major economic centres in Asia, are the examples of choice to be followed. These young people are gradually losing their connection with Mongolian traditions, by rejecting the way of life that their parents and grandparents followed.⁷ They are primarily reacting to the cultural effects of globalisation, but it cannot be stated that the changes resulting from this phenomenon are characteristic only of

4 Boldbaatar, J. – Sanjdorj, M. and Shirendeb, B. eds.: *Mongol Ulsiin Tüükh V. bot'* ('History of Mongolia, V') (Ulaanbaatar: Mongol Ulsiin Shinlekh Ukhaanii Akademi, 2004), 401–442.

5 Rossabi, Morris: *Modern Mongolia from Khans to Commissars to Capitalists* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 1–29.

6 <<https://www.iom.int/countries/mongolia>> accessed 13 November 2024; 'Internal Migration in Mongolia. Situation Analysis Report'. <<https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/Internal-Migration-Situation-in-Mongolia.pdf>> accessed 12 December 2024.

7 Janzen, Joerg and Bat-Ochir, E.: 'Rural-Urban Migration of Pastoral Nomads in Mongolia: Causes, Course and Consequences for the Country's Development', in Enkhtuvshin, E. ed.: *Nomadic Civilizations in Cross-Cultural Dialogue* (Ulaanbaatar: International Institute for the Study of Nomadic Civilizations, 2011), 309–313.

them. In terms of our topic, this is indicated, by, for example, the appearance of *kimchi* in the diet of a rural shepherd family.

The depopulation of rural areas and the disappearance of a traditional lifestyle can be largely attributed to this globalisation trend. Half of Mongolian society now lives in cities, resulting in the population of the capital city Ulaanbaatar drastically increasing over the last decade. During the 1990s, residents of the Mongolian capital numbered around 700,000 persons. By 2010, the registered population had increased to over one million people,⁸ and it has continued to steadily grow since then, reaching, nowadays, nearly 1.5 million residents.⁹

This phenomenon of urban population growth has been clearly visible from year to year in the expansion of *ger* (yurt) districts built by settlers on the hillsides surrounding the capital city, which are now extending to the far side of the hills in the area to the north of the capital.¹⁰ Over the past few decades, it has become a common habit among local urban dwellers to maintain smaller rural homes near the city, usually in the form of yurts, where they live from spring to autumn, only returning to their city residences during the extremely cold winter months. This acquisition of space has been simplified by zoning laws which stipulate that all Mongolian citizens have the right to fence off a specified area of land outside of the city for their own use – which has led to the development of a special system of ‘summer homes’ (*zuslan*) or yurts in the outlying areas beyond the residential districts surrounding Ulaanbaatar.¹¹

In the years following the political transition, especially during the last decade and a half, the number of new settlers in the capital city has increased far more rapidly than the number of newly-constructed flats – which those moving in from rural areas were often unable to afford.¹²

8 Szilágyi, Zsolt: ‘Városlakó nomádok. A politikai változás és a globalizáció hatásai a Mongol társadalomban’ (‘City-dwelling nomads. The effects of political change and globalisation on Mongolian society’), in Berta, Péter ed.: *Ethno-lore XXVII*. (Budapest: MTA Néprajzi Kutatóintézet, 2010), 325–337.

9 According to the latest data from the Ulaanbaatar Bureau of Statistics, the registered population of the capital in 2011 was 1,206,000 persons. <<http://www.ubstat.mn/>> accessed 13 November 2024.

10 Data from 2013 indicates that the population in the capital had reached 1,226,991 persons. <<http://www.infomongolia.com/ct/ci/208/137/Ulaanbaatar%20General%20Information>> accessed 13 November 2024.

11 In addition to establishing temporary homes and ‘summer residences’, many have also used this opportunity to build storage facilities and wholesale warehouses connected to their businesses.

12 Estimates by the Asian Development Bank suggest that the annual number of new arrivals to Ulaanbaatar is up to 40,000 persons. <<http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/2/dafcdcd6-9bfc-11e4-a6b6-00144feabdc0.html>> accessed 12 December 2024.

The explosive urbanisation phenomenon undoubtedly left its mark on the everyday life of the Mongols, including their eating habits. The changes in their food culture clearly show how Mongolians integrate into the globalised cultural environment, and, at the same time, how an opposite process can be observed – one which emphasises certain elements of traditional culture and which makes them into symbols of national self-representation. This phenomenon can also be observed in connection with some traditional Mongolian dishes.¹³

THE ROLE OF FOOD HERITAGE IN MONGOLIAN CULTURE

Food heritage plays an important role in self-identification and in the creation of group cohesion. Food culture is significant for defining identity and togetherness, both at a community and at a personal level, while the underlying social and economic processes also make themselves felt at the same time. Thus, certain dishes with the traditions connected to them serve as mediators, as a means of communication and as a channel, contributing to the legitimacy of a situation or of a person within the community.

A good example of the latter is presented by the picture of Öndör Gegeen Zanabazar (Fig. 1). In the second half of the 17th century, when the second wave of Buddhism was spreading in Mongolia, he was the first Mongolian Buddhist Head Lama. In the picture he is shown cutting a cooked sheep's tail (*uuts* in Mongolian) into pieces. This food item is an indispensable element of Mongolian festive meals – the cutting of it into pieces and the dividing of it among those present at a festive meal is the task of the head of the family. Therefore, in this picture, the new Mongolian Head Lama is represented as 'the head of the family' for all Mongolians.

The traditions of food and drink production and consumption of any nation are closely connected to that country's natural and climatic conditions, and to the lifestyle and religion of its people. Mongolian nomads live among extreme natural environments, and their food is based on animal husbandry and on products of animal origin. However, it would be wrong to state that they are just simple 'meat eaters'. Firstly, because in certain periods of the past centuries agricultural production was performed in areas where nomadism was practised.

13 'Zöv khollolvol Mongolchudd urt nasalna' ('Mongols will live longer if they eat properly'). <<https://oditan.mn/posts/7039>> accessed 13 November 2024.

14 See: Szilágyi, Zsolt: *A mongol főláma rövid története* ('A Brief History of Mongolian Head Lamas') (Budapest: Magyar Vallástudományi Társaság, 2010), 34.



Fig. 1. Öndör Gegeen with uuts¹⁴

This is clearly shown by the landscape-archaeological analysis of a settlement dated to between the 10th and 12th centuries – the time of the Kitan Empire – which has centuries-old signs of land cultivation. Around the excavated town settlement, furrows can be seen which were the result of tilling. On the other hand, the nomads could obtain grain through their trade contacts, and their diet was completed with plants from their environment.¹⁵

As the nomads have lived closer to nature than the peoples of settled nations, they have made and consumed many different types of food and drink produced from plants, and the cyclic changes of the seasons have had a greater effect on their diet than that of settled communities. Despite this, Mongolian gastronomy is not as rich as that of settled nations, as it strives for simplicity in terms of its technology and use of tools, hardly using spices; but it adapts better than the settled population to the natural resources available locally.¹⁶

TRADITIONAL NOMADIC DISHES IN MONGOLIA

In the traditional Mongolian diet, changes following the cycle of the seasons can be observed. In winter, the people eat meat (*khar* or *ulaan idee*), and fatty dishes (*shar idee*), completed with dairy products (*tsagaan idee*). In spring and summer, they eat goat (*yamaa*) more often, because they regard the goat as being a ‘cold nosed’ animal whose meat can only be consumed in hot weather. But in summer, they usually avoid eating meat, preferring to consume dairy products, sometimes supplemented with grains.

Summer is the time when fermented milk (*airag*) is consumed. It is part of the general diet with an undisputed alcohol content. In the autumn, more vegetables and fruit are included in the diet, preparing the body for the winter, which is a time poor in vitamins. The dishes particular to the Mongolian traditional diet are systematised as depicted in the following examples.

15 Szilágyi, Zsolt and Erdenebold, Lkh: ‘A Khi-Land tájregészeti projekt’, in Khishigbadam, G. and Enkhbaatar, M. eds.: *A Magyar- és a Mongol Tudományos Akadémia Együttműködései* (‘The Khi-Land Landscape Archaeological Project’) (Ulanbator: Ungariin Elchiin Saidii yaam 2022), 44–56; Harmath, Andras et al.: *Under the Eternal Blue Sky. Landscape Archaeology in Mongolia* (Budapest: Institute of Ethnology, 2019).

16 Chuluunjav, D.: ‘Khollokh soyol, kholloh zan üiliin zokhikh’ (‘Food culture and eating habits’) *Sonin.mn*, 22 October 2024. <<https://sonin.mn/newsDetail/6096>> accessed 12 December 2024.

The dishes are indicated by colours (*khar idee* – meat), (*tsagaan idee* – dairy products), and the various types of animal meat used – derived from ‘cold-nosed’ animals (*khüiten khushuutai mal*, хүйтэн хушуут мал), and ‘warm-nosed’ animals (*khaluun khushuutai mal*, халуун хушуут мал), are classified according their effect on the body, which also affects the period when they are consumed. In summer, goat is eaten, in winter sheep, and horse-meat is preferred. The most important aspect is that the nomads try to use the ingredients available to them in the most varied manner possible.

It is a characteristic feature of nomadic cuisine that it uses the simplest technologies that are fast and effective in food preparation. Although the basic ingredients (dried meat, dried cheese, and cottage cheese) are preserved, the nomadic way of life does not allow for the preservation of food for a long period of time, so almost everything is consumed fresh. Among their dishes, those that can be highlighted from our point of view, and which are not only part of their everyday diet but can also be connected to festivities, are as follows. At the *Tsagaan Sar* (the Lunar New Year), and at other festivals, such as *naadams* (family celebrations), a cooked half of a lamb (*uuts*) is placed in the middle of the table, and the *buuz* (a type of Mongolian steamed dumpling filled with meat), and the *khorkhog* (a special Mongolian BBQ) are also indispensable dishes for family occasions. It cannot be categorically stated that all of these are exclusively nomadic dishes as the Chinese *jiaozi*, *baozi* is very similar to the *buuz* in terms of its technology. The significance of the Mongolian meals listed here lies in their cultural role.

Due to the political and economic transformation that has been going on since the 1990s and the urbanisation boom as a consequence of it, Mongolian society has been divided into two parts. These days, hardly a quarter of the population leads a nomadic life – a kind of life which has certainly changed substantially from what it was like thirty or one hundred years ago. Today, the vast majority of the population of Mongolia live in cities. Thanks to the introduction of a market economy, product shortage, which characterised the decades of consolidated socialism (approx. 1950–1990), has been eliminated. Ulaanbaatar and the bigger cities can compete with any other big cities of the world in this respect.

Urbanisation, and the change in lifestyle that it brought about, has had a profound effect on the diet of Mongolians. After the product shortage caused by the initial economic hardships, people in the cities could gradually gain access to various basic ingredients. Since the seasonal ‘dependence’ on such ingredients was over, they



Fig. 2. Airag, Tsagaandelger sum, Mongolia, 2024. (Photo by Zsolt Szilágyi)



Fig. 3. Khorkhog with kimchi, Tsagaandelger sum, Mongolia, 2024. (Photo by Zsolt Szilágyi)

became acquainted with the cuisine of other nations, and they began to use components – like fish, vegetables, and spices – which are not elements of traditional nomadic culture. Strangely enough, though, the change in their taste was slower than the expansion of the ingredients available. Soon, in the cities, small restaurants appeared for those eating out, but these offered only traditional nomadic dishes in their menus, the taste of which did not always seem tasty to non-Mongolians. The extension of restaurant services was a slow process, but the adoption of technologies and spices used in the cuisines of other nations, the provision of a wider range of meals, and change in Mongolian taste, was an even slower process. In spite of this, city people in Mongolia today can be considered to be ‘omnivorous’, and they eat spicy foods that are a far cry from traditional Mongolian taste. The Korean, Japanese, Chinese and European restaurants, and so-called ‘traditional’ Mongolian restaurants, are always full of guests. The everyday eating habits of Mongolians have also undergone changes, as meals consumed during the day – lunch and dinner – are also often eaten out of home.

In consequence of these changes, products of animal origin, which were exclusively made for private consumption – like yoghurt (*tarag*), dried cottage cheese, cheese (*aarts*, *aaruul*, *byaslag*), and traditional dishes such as the *buuz*, became mass-produced products, which often involved a decline in their quality. However, phenomena that had been less conspicuous in the nomadic environment, such as a vegetarian diet, also appeared. This development also influenced the language, as the term ‘*tsagaan idee*’ (‘white meals containing milk’), and the expression, ‘*tsagaan khool*’ – which means meatless, vegetarian (and not dairy) food – appeared.¹⁷

THE ROLE OF MONGOLIAN DISHES IN CULTURAL HERITAGE NOWADAYS

During the past decade, the need to emphasise national culture has also become stronger in Mongolia. This is partly as a consequence of the fact that in 2005 Mongolia joined the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, and it is also in accordance with the cultural heritage policy of Mongolian governments after 2010.¹⁸ On the other hand, it can also be considered

17 ‘Tsagaan khool gej yuu ve?’ (‘What the “white dish” is?’). <<https://www.emonos.mn/blog/51>> accessed 12 November 2024.

18 ‘Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage’. <https://sherloc.unodc.org/cld/uploads/res/document/mng/law-on-the-protection-of-cultural-heritage_html/Cultural_Heritage_Law_eng.pdf> accessed 13 December 2024.

to be a cultural response to globalisation as has happened in other parts of the world. During the past decade, national cultural features, as constituent elements of identity, have been emphasised more frequently in public speech. Besides the nomadic lifestyle and cultural traditions, these cultural features include the early nomadic empires, the history of the Great Mongolian Empire, Mongolian sacred traditions, Mongolian clothing and motifs, as well as traditional Mongolian dishes, which have also become elements emphasising cultural independence, an anti-globalisation counter-culture, and national traditions.

Recent attempts at (re)constructing Mongolian national identity can be considered to have been successful. It is of special importance today for the Mongols living in an urbanised environment to feel that they can experience their nomadic identity by consuming traditional food. It is no wonder, then, that there is an increased prospect of traditional Mongolian gastronomy being designated as cultural heritage. It makes itself felt in various ways. The traditional nomadic lifestyle or/and the Mongolian lifestyle and culture – these two words are often interchangeable in the contexts of cultural heritage and memory policy – have become well-defined means of cultural identity. Traditional Mongolian cuisine and dishes have become important elements in the heritage-creating processes that are in progress in Mongolia today.

Due to some governmental and cultural political attempts, certain parts of traditional Mongolian gastronomy became official elements of the cultural heritage policy of the country. Thus, in 2015, Mongolia nominated *Traditional Technique of Making Airag in Khokhuur* for the UNESCO Representative list of Intangible Cultural Heritage.¹⁹

Food heritage has appeared as an important element of local tourism. As a part of this endeavour, programmes and contents connected to traditional Mongolian cuisine have been produced in social media, and also in other media where they promote hospitality and tourism businesses, and expand their knowledge of culinary techniques.

Khövsgöl County declared 2023 ‘the year of visiting Khövsgöl’,²⁰ thereby aiming at increasing internal tourism. As a means by which to do this, traditional dishes and

19 ‘Traditional technique of making *airag* in Khokhuur and its associated customs’. <<https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/traditional-technique-of-making-airag-in-khokhuur-and-its-associated-customs-01172>> accessed 13 December 2024.

20 Gantuyaa, B., ‘Khövsgöl Zochlokh jil’, *Montsame*. 3 October 2022. <<https://www.montsame.mn/mn/read/305094>> accessed 13 December 2024.

drinks characteristic of the region were popularised, and its history and culture were presented in cooperation with the Association of Mongolian Gastronomy and Tourism – an organisation which intends to popularise Mongolian eating and drinking culture.

Companies also launch their own brands, basing their products on traditional Mongolian gastronomy. The franchise restaurant chain called *Modern Nomads* is such an enterprise.²¹ Micro-communities organised around the topic of traditional Mongolian gastronomy, appeared in housing estates – making *buuz* together before the Lunar New Year, for example – or in the social media, especially on Facebook. Competitions are organised in connection with traditional foods.

In catering, ‘handcrafted’ and ‘traditional’ products have become synonymous with high quality meals. Thus, *buuz* and *geriin buuz* (‘traditional *buuz*’), for example, has retained its place in spite of the challenges posed by the change of lifestyle dictated by urbanisation, and it has remained an indispensable element of the most important Mongolian family occasions – such as at the celebration of the Lunar New Year (*Tsagaan sar*), and at weddings (*Khurim*, *Khurimlakh yos*) – where it appears on the festive table together with cooked lamb.

CONCLUSION

Mongolian nomadic dishes, as unique national cultural features, have found their way into high gastronomy, where they serve to symbolise the unique characteristics of traditional Mongolian culture in the space of globalised culture.

The examples mentioned here are less well known internationally since probably fewer people know about *tsuivan* (noodle with vegetables and beef) than they do about *ramen*, and the Mongols have no such international food-brand as the fermented and preserved cabbage, which is the basis of the Korean *kimchi diplomacy*, and neither is *buuz* unique, as the method of its making in Mongolia, is similar to that used for the Chinese stewed dumplings called *jiaozi*, *baozi*.

Nonetheless, the Mongolian dishes listed here constitute an integral part of present-day Mongolian cultural tradition, and while their consumption provides culinary enjoyment, it also gives us an insight into nomadic culture. In the ongoing Mongolian

21 <<https://www.modernnomads.mn/>> accessed 13 November 2024.



Fig. 4. Buuz, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, 2024. (Photo by Zsolt Szilágyi)



Fig. 5. Khuushuur, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, 2024. (Photo by Zsolt Szilágyi)

heritage-creating process, it is as important as Mongolian dance, the Mongolian long song, and the other parts of Mongolian nomadic tradition.

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PART VI:
FOOD HERITAGE IN TIMES OF
CRISIS



HÅKAN JÖNSSON

RESTRICTIONS AS CULINARY HERITAGE: A STUDY OF RESTAURANT POLITICS IN SWEDEN

ABSTRACT

A detailed restriction system for restaurants in Sweden was developed from 1850 to 1922. The original restriction framework was dismantled in 1955, but many of the restrictions remained in place. The paper, based on official documents and news articles, argues that the restrictions can be seen as a living culinary cultural heritage, which has implications for both the restaurant industry and the general public.

INTRODUCTION

Eating out in Sweden has been a peculiar experience for international visitors, especially if alcoholic beverages have been included in the meal.¹ The unusual number of restrictions in relation to alcohol causes confusion and frustration. This article aims to provide an historical background to the restrictions and to discuss how the restrictions can be seen as a culinary cultural heritage through the lenses of gastronationalism and different meanings of culture.

The article starts with a recapitulation of the setting up of restrictions, their rationale and applications in different periods, and the national characteristics of the restrictions. The article then moves on to describe restrictions in recent years and ends with an attempt to theorise restrictions as a culinary cultural heritage.

The empirical material for the article consists of official documents, pamphlets from both official and private actors in the restaurant sector, and news articles. The

1 Reference to this study: Håkan Jönsson: Restrictions as Culinary Heritage: A Study of Restaurant Politics in Sweden. In Anikó Bádi and Patricia Lysaght (eds.): *Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage*. Budapest: ELTE RCH Institute of Ethnology – Museum of Ethnography, 2025. pp. 417–429.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61380/978-963-567-084-0-26>

material has been collected as part of a longer research project on restaurant culture in Sweden. Earlier publications by this author include monographs on eating out in Sweden,² the gastronomic revolution,³ and an article about Swedish gastronationalism.⁴ However, this is my first article focusing *strictly on the restrictions of the restaurant scene*.

BACKGROUND: THE CREATION OF PUBLIC RESTAURANT COMPANIES

Sweden came late in the industrialisation process, but from the 1850s onwards a rapid industrialisation process started. As part of the new era, modern hotels with fine dining restaurants were built in conjunction with the railway stations in many cities.⁵ It was part of an international development, in which the modern restaurant that had originated in France in the late 18th century, spread throughout the world.⁶ As in other countries, the rising bourgeoisie developed a public space at restaurants, and gastronomy became an important part of the cultural capital of the rising urban middle class.⁷

Parallel to this rise of modern, upper-class restaurants, their popular predecessors, the taverns, began to be seen as a problem. From the Middle Ages, an extensive tavern system had developed in Sweden. Despite some attempts to regulate the taverns, they flourished until the middle of the 19th century. At that time, the Swedish political model was reformed. Municipalities at the local level became the basic political unit, with responsibility for social issues, to which the taverns belonged. In the 1850s, the municipalities started 'Systembolag' – companies controlled by the local municipalities. These companies were the forerunners of the still existing 'Systembolaget', the state monopoly which has exclusive permission to sell alcoholic beverages with an alcohol content higher than 3.5%. While the contemporary 'Systembolaget' only deals with alcohol sales in bottles, the main

2 Jönsson, Håkan and Tellström, Richard: *Från krog till krog. Svenskt uteätande under 700 år* ('From tavern to tavern. Eating out in Sweden over 700 years') (Stockholm: Natur & Kultur, 2018).

3 Jönsson, Håkan: *Den gastronomiska revolutionen* ('The gastronomic revolution') (Stockholm: Carlsson Bokförlag, 2012).

4 Jönsson, Håkan: 'A food nation without culinary heritage? Gastronationalism in Sweden', *Journal of Gastronomy and Tourism* 4/4 (2020), 223–237.

5 Nilsson, Jan-Henrik: *Hotellens och krogarnas framväxt; Ett kulturgeografiskt perspektiv* ('The rise of hotels and restaurants; A cultural geography perspective') (Örebro: Örebro universitet, 2016).

6 Spang, Rebecca: *The Invention of the Restaurant* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

7 Trubek, Amy: *Haute cuisine: How the French invented the culinary profession* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Philadelphia Press, 2000).

business of the early versions of the 'Systembolaget' was to sell and serve alcohol by the glass, in simple taverns, or 'folk restaurants'.⁸

The municipalities were in charge of the licensing of taverns, which gave them the power to reduce the previously-flourishing market of small, private taverns. As an example, the city of Gothenburg took over all the privately-run taverns in 1865, dismantling most of them and integrating the remaining into the public 'Systembolaget'. Stockholm closed 106 of the 193 taverns in 1877. Rural regions were even more affected by the new policies. It has been estimated that 90% of the taverns in rural areas and 50% in urban areas were dismantled during the late 1800s.⁹

The simple taverns for the growing urban working class had become a symbol for societal problems among social reformers in Sweden, who demanded that the public sector should interfere in this aspect of society. In the first paragraph of the statutes of the first 'Systembolaget', it was stated that it was not just the alcohol itself that had negative effects:

The morality and prosperity of the working class in our society have their worst enemy in the taverns. It is not only the alcohol in itself, which produces moral corruption, wretchedness and poverty, but the temptations, bad examples and disorders that could be found at the taverns.¹⁰

THE DEMOCRATIC BREAKTHROUGH AND RESTAURANT POLITICS

Restaurant politics was an integral part of alcohol politics, an area where liberals and socialists, and the new and the increasingly-dominant political parties, united. Both parties had strong factions of teetotalists and joined forces to regulate the production and consumption of alcohol. Until World War I, restrictions were applied exclusively to the taverns that catered for the working classes. But after the democratic breakthrough with equal voting rights for all men in 1917 and for women in 1921, the situation changed. The first election in which all citizens of legal age could vote was a referendum on the prohibition of alcoholic beverages, that took place in 1922. The result was a narrow majority against total prohibition. As a compromise,

8 Boberg, Stig: *Folket, supen och staten; Systembolagskrogar och folkrestauranger 1855–1955* ('The people, the drink, and the state; Public taverns and folk restaurants 1855–1955') (Stockholm: Sveriges allmänna restaurangaktiebolag, 1981).

9 Frånberg, Per: 'Sprit & staten' ('Alcohol and the state'), *Tidskriften Populär Historia* 1 (1997), 4–17.

10 *Statutes for Systembolaget*, § 1 (1850).

a national system designed by the liberal politician and medical doctor, Ivan Bratt, was implemented after the referendum.¹¹ All restaurants, including fine dining establishments, were obliged to follow the new system with detailed restrictions, which were in place at national level between 1922 and 1955, a period still recognised as 'The restriction years'. To prepare visitors for the Swedish experience of eating out, the most important licencing regulations were summarised in a travel guide in the following way:

LICENSING REGULATIONS

With regard to the serving of alcoholic beverages, restaurants are classified into four groups, namely:

1. Temperance Restaurants.
2. Restaurants Licensed to Serve Beer.
3. Restaurants Licensed to Serve Beer and Wine.
4. Fully Licensed Restaurants.

For your information, we give the following summary of Swedish restrictions of the right to serve wine and spirits.

1. No wines or spirits may be served before 12.00 o'clock (noon) on week days or before 1 P.M on Sundays and holidays.
2. Alcoholic drinks may be served only with meals costing at least Sw. Kr. 2-. Not more than 7,5 cl. before 3 P.M or 15 cl. after 3 P.M may be served to male guests at any one sitting. The maximum quantity allowed to female guests at anyone sitting is 7,5 cl. When Swedish Punch is served, the sold quantities may be doubled.
3. Over and above the quantities mentioned under Point 2, so called 'lättagrogg' may be served. 'Lättagrogg' is mixed before being served and contains 2,5 cl. of spirits mixed with not less than 20 cl. of water or another non-alcoholic drink. Two such drinks may be ordered without meals or four with meals.

¹¹ The restriction system was based on the proposal published in: Bratt, Ivan and Petrén, Alfred: *Alkoholen och samhället. Betänkande angående de samhällsskadliga inflytanden bruket af rusdrycker medför jämte förslag till systematiska åtgärder för deras bekämpande i Sverige* ('Alcohol and society. Report on the harmful social influences of the use of intoxicants, together with proposals for systematic measures to combat them in Sweden') (Stockholm: Isaac Marcus' boktr.-aktiebolag, 1912).

4. Strong wines may be served only with meals (see above), the quantity being limited to $\frac{1}{4}$ bottle per guest and meal. With light meals or pastry etc., minimum value 30 öre, 5 cl. of strong wine may be served per guest and meal.

5. Sparkling and light wines. No restrictions are imposed on the serving of these wines, beyond those given under Point 1.¹²

As stated in the pamphlet, this was just a summary of the licencing regulations. The regulations also included the type of meals served that permitted alcohol to be ordered. Such meals had to consist of cooked, 'proper' food, not just sandwiches, pastries or other light snacks. Strong beer (more than 3.5% alcohol) was prohibited. Not only did the regulations dwell on the quantities of alcohol that could be ordered and the type of food associated with the serving of alcohol, they also strictly regulated the setting in which such activity could take place. It was prohibited to sell drinks over the counter in a bar, as only seated guests were allowed to order drinks. Only limited entertainment could be provided. No dancing or singing by female vocalists was permitted in combination with alcohol servings, as only instrumental music was allowed. Later generations have ridiculed the standard 'Restaurant trio' – three elderly, bored, male musicians on piano, violin and violoncello' playing a standard repertoire of 'restaurant music'.¹³

The restrictions had an educational purpose. The idea was that by getting used to consuming alcohol with meals and in moderate quantities, the bourgeois way of socialising civilly with alcohol would spread to the working class. However, the effect of the restrictions in this context was questionable. Rather than sitting down and eating and drinking in moderation, an effect of the system was that various creative attempts were made to circumvent the restrictions and to ingest larger quantities of alcohol than intended. The compulsion to eat cooked food led to a special genre of so-called restriction dishes, these being dishes that followed the minimum standard for food, but were not really meant to be eaten.¹⁴

ELEVATING THE MINDS AND CULTURE OF THE WORKING CLASS

Public folk restaurants should provide a moral example when compared to the traditional taverns. This required changes both to the supply of alcoholic beverages

¹² *Hotels & Restaurants in Skåne 1947* (Malmö and Kristianstad: Länsstyrelserna i Skåne, 1947), 8.

¹³ Jönsson and Tellström: *Från krog till krog. Svenskt uteätande under 700 år*, 212.

¹⁴ Jönsson and Tellström: *Från krog till krog. Svenskt uteätande under 700 år*, 213.



Fig. 1 (a). Hotel Rydberg, Stockholm, Sweden, 1903. Photographer unknown; from <<https://stockholmskallan.stockholm.se/post/9431>> accessed 9 December 2024. The American Bar at Hotel Rydberg was a novelty in 1903.



Fig. 1 (b). Hotel Rydberg, Stockholm, Sweden, 1914. Photographer unknown; from <<https://stockholmskallan.stockholm.se/post/35226>> accessed 9 December 2024. Creative Commons licence (CC-BY). Stockholm imposed the alcohol restrictions earlier than the rest of the nation. After the alcohol restrictions were imposed, the bar was reorganised and couches were put in front of the counter to signal that ordering over the counter was not allowed. Shortly after the photo was taken, the hotel and the bar closed.

and the premises in which alcohol was served. In addition to the regulation of food and drink, it was important that the consumption took place in suitable premises. In the guidelines for the public restaurants, it was emphasised that the interior and design of the premises was an important part of the sobriety work. The venue should consist of bright and large rooms with a focus on food service. In contrast to the simple furnishings in traditional taverns, which were mostly located in simple, small houses, the new public restaurants had high ceilings and large windows. It was thought that if the space was clean, bright, healthy and spacious, it would have a positive effect on the guests. In a report from Stockholm, a company restaurant manager emphasised the advantages of the new toilet, and claimed that the signs telling guests not to spit on the floor, and the many spittoons provided, ensured that the guests and the premises were in a clean, tidy and healthy state.¹⁵

The surplus income from the restaurants was partly dedicated to educational purposes. With these resources, local artists were hired to decorate the walls. According to the management of Stockholm's public restaurant company (SARA), the renewed interior design of the folk restaurants had an uplifting effect on the guests and the ambiance:

As a small but quite telling example, it can be mentioned that, after the rearrangement of the exterior design of folk restaurants, it was possible without difficulty to teach the guests the habit of removing their headgear during meals. [...] The former sharp boundary between restaurants of the so-called lower and upper classes has to a great extent been wiped out, and the public drinking-houses have been raised to a more dignified and sophisticated level¹⁶ (Translation by the author).

With art as a tool, those of the working class had become 'decent'. They were seated during meals, took off their caps indoors and thus behaved more in accordance with the conventions of better restaurants. This was also seen as part of democratisation, the erasing of boundaries between the upper and lower classes. Another part of the restaurant policy was to keep down the number of permits to operate restaurants. To be able to establish a restaurant, a 'need for representation' which was not covered

15 Rosenberg, Einar: *Stockholms Allmänna Restaurant Aktiebolag; En tioårshistorik på uppdrag av bolagets styrelse utarbetad av Einar Rosenberg* ('Stockholms Allmänna Restaurant Aktiebolag; A ten-year history commissioned by the company's board of directors prepared by Einar Rosenberg') (Stockholm: SARA, 1925).

16 Rosenberg: *Stockholms Allmänna Restaurant Aktiebolag; En tioårshistorik på uppdrag av bolagets styrelse utarbetad av Einar Rosenberg*, 46.

by current establishments, had to be present in the area. Thus, Swedish urban space acquired a special character, in which the restaurants were spread out, being evenly distributed based on how many people lived and worked in an area.

INVERTED GASTRONATIONALISM

The formalised restriction system was dismantled in 1955. However, the number of licences in operation remained limited, and with high prices for alcohol, consumption was kept down. It was still mandatory to provide cooked food in the restaurants, although it was no longer necessary to order it. While the previous system focused on the guests, the new 'liberal' system focused on the regulation of restaurant businesses. Restaurants that had too high a percentage of alcohol sales might have their permit cancelled, which led restaurants to subsidise 'dish of the day' to increase the number of food orders. Restaurateurs had to maintain order in the premises, undergo training in Swedish alcohol policy, and avoid serving drunk guests. The public restaurant companies continued to be an important actor in the restaurant sector. In 1970, they were merged into a nationwide company, which became Europe's second largest restaurant group.

All in all, this meant that Sweden, as a culinary nation, continued to differ from the other countries on the European continent. There was a broad political consensus that the Swedish restaurant scene required special Swedish regulations. Most proposals to deregulate the restaurant sector were rejected, which in turn reflected a national self-image that Sweden would be a forerunner when it came to promoting sobriety, cleanliness and work.

Michaela deSocey coined the term gastronationalism.¹⁷ The term was originally attributed to a growing interest from politicians in a number of nations in Europe to claim a position as a gastronomic nation. In a previous article I have described how Swedish gastronationalism differs from that of other countries, in particular by the absence of heritage claims.¹⁸ While acknowledging the importance of the restriction years in shaping a distinct national profile, I did not at the time realise that the restriction heritage in itself could be seen as a form of inverted gastronationalism – a

17 DeSocey, Michaela: 'Gastronationalism: Food traditions and authenticity politics in the European Union', *American Sociological Review* 75 (2010), 432–455.

18 Jönsson, Håkan: *Den gastronomiska revolutionen* ('The gastronomic revolution') (Stockholm: Carlsson Bokförlag, 2012).

Ser. B.

CLEMENSKÄLLAREN. N^o

Dat. / 192 kl.

Innehavaren med sällskap män, kvinnor har
inlagt måltid, som berättigar till cl. spirituosa inom
restauranten.

(På detta spritbevis får inte uttagas spritbevis för andra personer än här näm-
nande, samt skall beviset användas till återköp till kassan.)

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Fig. 2. Restrictions sheet used by the restaurant staff at Clemensköllaren, Lund. Printed in Lund, Sweden, in 1927, by Berlingska boktryckeriet (From Lund University Library with permission). To ensure restrictions were followed, the serving staff were obliged to document the number of people at the table, their gender, and time of day when the meal was taking place, and to calculate how much alcohol could be served at the table in question.



Fig. 3. Restaurant Shanghai, Stockholm, around 1922. Photographer unknown; from <<https://stockholmskallan.stockholm.se/post/16536>> accessed 9 December 2024. Creative Commons licence (CC-BY). The clean room and the wall paintings created a nice atmosphere. At least some of the guests had removed their headgear during the meal.

nation proud of its attempts to regulate and downplay gastronomy in public spaces. The restaurant was a symbol of either excessive drinking or conspicuous consumption, and both were seen as morally and politically questionable activities during the heyday of the Swedish welfare state.

The gastronationalism of the restriction years did not aim to export food and drink or attract culinary tourists, but to create a country where citizens learned to eat and drink in moderation. Erasing the boundaries between upper and lower classes in the restaurant sector, could be seen as part of a national project to reduce class differences for a new national community in a welfare state.

THE LEGACY OF THE PERIOD

During the writing of a monograph on the history of eating out in Sweden¹⁹ I did a search on research literature on Swedish restaurant history. In the newly-built faculty library for the Humanities at Lund University, I found that most of the works had been placed in category 363: 'Societal problems – other'. That says something important about the view on eating out in Sweden. Restaurants have been something of a necessary evil, a social problem that must be regulated. Although eating out has increased dramatically, and the view of gastronomy is now more in line with that of other countries, part of the legacy from the restriction period lives on. An example is the Swedish government's reaction to when the parliament, in 2016, approved an initiative to dismantle the regulation that restaurant staff must intervene if spontaneous dancing occurred in the restaurant, unless the restaurant had applied for, and had been granted, a 'dance permit licence'. The government was reluctant to take any measures, not even when a restaurateur in Malmö gained some fame after being fined when a cover band at an after-work session had played such catchy rhythms that the guests had started moving in time with the music. Only in July 2023 did the new centre-right government decide to abolish the dance permit system.

During the Covid-19 pandemic that broke out in the spring of 2020, the restrictions were designed in a way that was particularly troublesome for the restaurant and culture sector. While Sweden was internationally known for 'loose' restrictions, restaurants were an exception in this context. Serving at bars was again prohibited

19 Jönsson and Tellström: *Från krog till krog. Svenskt uteätande under 700 år.*

– the guests had to remain seated. No more than four people were permitted at each table and the sale of alcoholic beverages was prohibited after 8.00 p.m. The similarities with the restriction years were striking.

Congestion at shopping centres and in public transport was considered a necessary evil. Crowding in connection with food and drink intake, on the other hand, was unnecessary and immoral, and should therefore be avoided, regardless of the consequences for the food service sector. The legacy from the time when restaurants were seen as a societal problem was thus still very much alive.

THEORISING 'RESTRICTION CULTURE'

The point that the Swedish restaurant sector is shaped by restrictions is now hopefully convincingly argued, but the reader may question if it is relevant to call it a *restriction culture*. This section will sketch the reasoning behind the terminology.

The word culture is one of the most difficult words to define, since it has numerous meanings. It is not possible here to recapitulate the debates about the term 'culture' in disciplines such as ethnology, anthropology and art history, so I will focus on Raymond Williams's classical account of the genealogy and use of different meanings of the term 'culture'.²⁰ Williams defines three main uses of the term:

1. The works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity. This refers to the type of works on display in cultural institutions, such as museums, theatres and opera houses.
2. A general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development. This 'Culture', with a capital 'C', is linked to the notion that something can be cultivated, thereby raising it to a higher standard than the natural or unrefined stage.
3. A particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, a group or humanity in general. This is how culture is used in terms such as American culture, Folk culture etc.

When teaching classes in ethnology and food culture, I remind students that the food culture researcher deals with culture in the third 'anthropological' meaning of the word. We should avoid claims about one culture being superior to another. By

²⁰ Williams, Raymond: *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Croom Helm, 1976).

paying equal attention to the food cultures of marginalised groups and the elite, we aim to illuminate the meaning-creation processes involved, without making moral judgments or restricting cultural activities to the domain of the fine arts.

However, confronted with the empirical material for this article, I believe that this neglect of culture in the first two definitions in the list may lead to a simplified and reductionist approach for the study of restaurant culture. To understand the long-standing history of restrictions in Swedish restaurant politics, we must acknowledge that all three dimensions of culture were enacted in the practices of the policy makers. By using Culture type 1 (paintings and sophisticated music), the restaurant guests were supposed to embark on the journey of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development (Culture type 2). By creating a cultivated restaurant space, the guests, especially those of working-class backgrounds, should become cultivated, i.e. start to drink in moderation while consuming proper cooked foods, and seated with their headgear removed. By imposing restrictions on all types of restaurants, an attempt to create a more general sense of belonging through a supposed Swedishness, a modern type of person-embracing values such as democracy, modesty, equality and hard work, would be accomplished. This idea, although challenged by recent decades of a more liberal attitude towards restaurants as public spaces, has been integrated into the everyday practices of policy making to such an extent, that I believe it is accurate to talk about a *restriction culture* to understand the peculiarities of the Swedish restaurant sector. Restrictions are thus to be seen as a culinary cultural heritage, that still shapes the history of eating out in Sweden.

CONCLUSION

This article has discussed the importance of restrictions for Swedish restaurant culture. The ambition has been to discuss how regulatory systems can affect the food culture in a particular country. It has also aimed at problematising the use of the concept of culture, and argues that a holistic view of culture that includes meanings that are usually perceived as separate, can broaden our understanding of restaurant culture.

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AGNIESZKA PAWŁOWSKA-MAINVILLE

HARVESTING GOLD FROM TREES

TREE-BEEKEEPING AS AN ELEMENT OF FOREST FOOD SYSTEMS
AND CULINARY HERITAGE IN POLAND

ABSTRACT

This article explores the intricate relationship between the living cultural practice of tree-beekeeping, and its role within culinary heritage and food systems in Poland. By illustrating how tree-beekeeping is woven into the fabric of forest ecosystems, this article highlights how intangible cultural heritage custodians have forged a unique approach that not only sustains biodiversity but also fosters new ways of perceiving natural landscapes.

INTRODUCTION

Forests, especially boreal ones, are often viewed as solely ecological environments where culture and humankind are absent.¹ This distinction is explicit in the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Site Convention where spaces of ‘outstanding universal value’ are located on a culture-nature spectrum,² reflecting a dichotomy that separates the two. This opposition tends to interpret nature as pristine and untouched, and culture with human-made landscapes and built monuments.³ The dichotomy overlooks the interconnectedness of nature and culture and is perceived as problematic within the world heritage discourse, particularly for people in forest

1 Reference to this study: Agnieszka Pawłowska-Mainville: Harvesting Gold from Trees: Tree-beekeeping as an Element of Forest Food Systems and Culinary Heritage in Poland. In Anikó Bádi and Patricia Lysaght (eds.): *Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage*. Budapest: ELTE RCH Institute of Ethnology – Museum of Ethnography, 2025. pp. 431–443.

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2 Pawłowska-Mainville, Agnieszka: *‘Stored in the Bones’: Safeguarding Indigenous Living Heritages* (Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Press, 2023) <<https://uofmpress.ca/books/stored-in-the-bones>> accessed 6 March 2023.

3 UNESCO. ‘The Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention.’ WHC.21/01, 31 July 2021 <<http://whc.unesco.org/en/guidelines>> accessed 6 March 2023).

spaces whose activities and cultural expressions interpret landscapes as living entities shaped by both ecological processes and human interactions.⁴ Recent shifts in the discourse aim to integrate these perspectives, recognising cultural landscapes and biocultural diversity as essential to heritage safeguarding and the sustainability of food systems and humanity's heritage.

Tree-beekeeping, the practice of building bee hives in living trees, is one example of an intangible cultural heritage element of Poland that integrates culture and nature in a unique way through forest landscapes. The practice was recognised as an important element of Eastern Europe's cultural heritage and was placed as an element of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) on the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2020, marking its importance not only as a sustainable practice but also as a living tradition with deep cultural roots. The inclusion of this practice on the UNESCO list highlights not only its critical role in shaping ecological and cultural landscapes, but also acknowledges the significance of this practice to producing 'liquid gold' – honey, which has served as an important product of culinary heritage in the region since time immemorial. By outlining how boreal apiary merges nature and culture, this paper illustrates the unique way tree-beekeeping exists as a form of heritage-inspired livelihoods in 'empty' spaces, emphasising the role of culture-custodians in shaping resilient traditions, honey production, and transmission of living heritage elements associated with food systems.

TREE-BEEKEEPING AND ITS ROLE IN LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS

Since the beginning of the 20th century, large populations of bees (*Apoidea* species) in Poland (and elsewhere!) are under threat of extinction. Human-caused environmental impacts including pollutants and contaminants in the air and soil, industrial agriculture, aggrandisement of urban areas, and an expansion of monocultures, have caused significant destruction of natural forest habitats.⁵ This has resulted in the alarming decrease of many pollinators. Tree-beekeeping involves

4 Pawłowska-Mainville: *Stored in the Bones*; Bordo, Jonathan: 'Jack Pine–Wilderness Sublime or the Erasure of the Aboriginal Presence from the Landscape', *Journal of Canadian Studies* 27/4 (1992–93), 98–128; UNESCO. '37th Session of the World Heritage Committee (37 COM), Decision 37 COM 8B.19', 2013:175 §b.

5 Presentation by Andrzej Pazura at 'Tree-Beekeeping Conference', Koło, Poland 19 October 2024; Presentation by Andrzej Oleksa at 'Tree-Beekeeping Conference', Koło, Poland 19 October 2024.

stewardship over honey bee colonies in tree hollows, and its revival promotes the bringing of bees back to their natural habitats – forests.

While tree-beekeeping is recognised as an intangible cultural heritage element in Poland, the practice also actively contributes to honey bee biodiversity through long-term observation, and citizen science, sometimes intergenerationally.⁶ Knowledge about the specific methods of tree selection, hive preparation, and honey harvesting, are retained as cultural heritage; the transmission of these skills ensures that tree-beekeeping remains adaptive to both ecological and social changes, making it a resilient practice, and a reminder of the strong link between honey, bees, and (culinary) heritage. In that sense, tree-beekeeping plays a vital role in local food systems by providing forest honey, a unique product that carries the flavours and essence of the forest environment. This honey, often referred to as ‘liquid gold’ is highly valued for its intrinsic worth as well as for its ecological, economic, and health importance, all of which are tied to local foodways. Given that food systems are a set of interconnected components or elements that work together as a whole to achieve a specific function or purpose, they typically involve inputs, processes, and feedback loops that maintain its operation. A food system starts not only from ‘food’, but from the earth, specifically, from the source of edible products through to harvesting and eventually to consumption.⁷ Tree-beekeeping has an important role to play in local food systems and culinary heritage, and below I elaborate on how groundwork, harvesting, and consumption serve to better understand this living heritage as an element of Poland’s socio-ecological landscape. These processes do not only sustain the tradition but also support biodiversity and local economies, ensuring the continuity of natural and cultural values within the tree-beekeeping community. In this way, tree-beekeeping bridges heritage practices with modern needs, reinforcing connections between people, culture, and the environment.

Laying the groundwork

Tree-beekeeping is a fundamental element of local food systems, as bees provide essential ecosystem services. Creating environments that protect pollinators like

6 Personal communication from Andrzej Pazura at ‘Tree-Beekeeping Conference, Koło, Poland 19 October 2024; Personal communication from Piotr Piłasiwicz, Lipice, Poland, 23 April 2024.

7 Pawłowska-Mainville, Agnieszka: ‘Aki miijim’, “land food” and the sovereignty of the Asatiwisiipe Anishinaabeg boreal forest food system’, in Settee, Priscilla and Shukla, Shailesh eds.: *Indigenous Food Sovereignty: Concepts, Cases, and Conversations* (Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars Publishing, 2020), 57–82.

bees supports the pollination of plants and crops in both forest and adjacent agricultural areas, fostering a symbiotic relationship between forest ecosystems and food production systems. Additionally, this practice preserves the intangible cultural heritage associated with traditional foodways, enriching both ecological and cultural landscapes. In this context, a boreal apiary is about much more than honey; bees cared for by apiarists play a crucial role in food systems by pollinating crops that provide fruits, vegetables, nuts, and other essential food products. Their pollination services enhance both the yield and quality of these foods, supporting food security. Additionally, by maintaining biodiversity, bees help to sustain resilient forest ecosystems that provide a wide array of food resources for human consumption.⁸ To ensure the survival of bees and the production of honey, a diverse and vibrant forest ecosystem is needed for the honey bees (*A. Mellifera mellifera*).

At the heart of tree-beekeeping lies a body of socio-ecological knowledge that informs the practice. This knowledge encompasses everything from selecting the right tree: tall, straight, and healthy enough that the hive will sustain the next numerous generations of bees (Fig. 1). A tree-beekeeper knows that the tree must be protected from winds, have sufficient girth to hold the hive and support the apiarist, as well as be exposed to the sun in early autumn and spring so that the bees have warmth when they need it most. It is also important to acquire the knowledge and experience required to climb several metres high up the tree and to dig out a cavity in the tree without injuring it (and oneself), which also necessitates physical strength and technical dexterity. Tree-beekeeping also requires familiarity with the creation of the hives themselves, whether they be hives built directly in the trees (*barcie*) or hives made from cut trunks suspended in forests, or hollowed logs near homes (*kłody*). Once a beekeeper selects a tree, traditional tools handmade by a blacksmith and a rope-maker are often employed; however, contemporary tools such as power chainsaws can also be used. The practice should not be frozen in time but instead remain living and adaptive. Today, while beekeepers still create their own hives, they also transfer caretaking responsibilities of their own hives to others.

Establishing a solid foundation also involves managing tree health by addressing invasive species, parasites, and diseases that could threaten the bee colonies. Additionally, tree-beekeepers must protect the hives from wild animals, such as martens and birds, which may be eager to eat the bees or steal the honey. Overall, tree-beekeepers closely monitor the conditions of their trees, the surrounding forest,

⁸ Information from Edyta Szast & Krysia Dudek workshop on 'Forest Gifts', Toruń, Poland, 22 October 2024.



Fig. 1. A tree-hive visible in the tall pine tree. (Photo by Agnieszka Pawłowska-Mainville, 2022)

and the areas where their hives are located, ensuring that their activities maintain ecosystem balance and support thriving pollinator populations.

The relationship between beekeepers and their forests is influenced by the timing of bee activity, tree health, and various environmental and legal factors. Understanding bee behaviour is crucial; these custodians of intangible cultural heritage (ICH custodians) must build a good rapport with the bees by respecting them and establishing a reciprocal relationship that encourages the bees to visit the hive and remain for several years. For many tree-beekeepers, the character of the beekeepers themselves is integral to the success of this practice. Historically, tree beekeeping followed strict cultural protocols, with beekeepers chosen based on their character traits, such as honesty and kindness, and their knowledge of ecological processes. Thus, tree-beekeeping transcends mere economic activity; it is a cultural practice rich in socio-cultural wisdom, language, skills, and patience. When all these factors are combined, they enhance local food systems and contribute to the continuity of culinary heritage elements.

Acquiring honey

Once a tree hive is built, and the bees have established a family, the ‘acquisition’ or harvesting component of the food system deals with the steps before ‘food’ (i.e. honey) and other bee products are consumed. As mentioned above, tree hives are situated between two to twenty metres above ground and discreetly placed among thick foliage, protecting them from potential threats such as predators and human interference. Traditionally, honey was taken from the hive in the autumn using the *leziwo* to climb the tree. A *leziwo* is a specialized hemp or leather rope with a wooden harness and a handmade ‘hook’ that tree-beekeepers use to safely access the hives located in the trees.⁹ The *leziwo* distributes the beekeeper’s weight and allows the harvester to free up their hands to manage tools, handle the bees, and take out the honey. The process begins by securing a strong rope around the base of the tree, often using a specific knot that ties and unties in one swift movement – yet the knot must be reliable enough to support the beekeeper’s weight. Another method of climbing involves alternating between pulling the rope and stepping into small notches or footholds carved into the tree, allowing the beekeeper to work their way up the tree trunk. Today, an aluminium ladder is frequently used but many tree-

⁹ Presentation by Tomasz Dzierzanowski and Agnieszka Pawłowska-Mainville at ‘Tree-Beekeeping Conference’, Koło, Poland, 19 October 2024.



Fig. 2. Honeycombs harvested directly from the tree-hive. The next step is to squeeze out the honey. (Photo by Agnieszka Pawłowska-Mainville, 2022)

beekeepers also believe that it is important to learn the traditional method and to use it at least once a year. Because the *leziwo* combines a very complex and effective design with generations of knowledge for safely working at heights, using it requires technical skills, physical strength, and dexterity from the user, which is an at-risk skill and knowledge system informing this intangible cultural element.

Upon reaching the hive, the tree-beekeeper uses a smoker to smudge the bees. The smoker is essential for soothing the bees and reducing the risk of stings. While minimising the bees' agitation is important, my experience shows that men of the tree-beekeepers that I have worked with do not use smokers very often. Some of the men say that the relationship they have with their bees establishes trust between the two, almost as if the bees recognise the keeper (some men say that they are familiar with their smell). Once the honey is carefully extracted from the honeycombs, it is ready to be consumed (Fig. 2). Knowledge of the tree's structure and the bees' behaviour is vital at this stage, ensuring that only the right amount of honey is harvested without disturbing the bee family's viability. The beekeeper also needs to know how to avoid harming the bees and when to leave the hive alone for its natural replenishment.

Finally, once the honeycombs are harvested, they are broken into manageable pieces, and then crushed by hand or pressed to release the raw honey. Forest honeys include honey from trees such as linden, oak, and various fruit trees, and the flavour can vary significantly depending on the tree species from which the nectar is sourced. Because it is not yet processed for cleanliness, tree-harvested honey may have richer, deeper flavours, often with a darker colour due to higher mineral content and the types of nectar collected. The honey may often have 'impurities' such as pollen grains, wax particles, bee parts, insect residues, and foreign matter, but these may be filtered out using a fine sieve or cheesecloth. In some cases, the honeycomb is left intact and stored with the honey for those who prefer its texture and added flavour. Once strained and pure, the honey is stored in jars or containers, ensuring that it is sealed tightly to preserve its freshness and natural properties.

Consumption inspired by culinary heritage

Honey and tree-beekeeping have long been integral to Poland's culinary heritage, with traditions stretching back to medieval times. This form of apiculture, today practised in regions of Spała, Augustów, the Wigierski National Park, as well as in

the lower Vistula River Valley, among other places, is more than a method of regional food production – honey holds a revered place in Polish cuisine, serving as a multifunctional ingredient that enhances flavour, preserves food, and provides health benefits. Some examples of foods made from honey in Polish culinary heritage include sweet mead (which is a fermented alcoholic beverage made from honey, water and species), gingerbread spiced cakes and cookies sweetened with honey, and *miodownik*, which is a thinly-layered honey cake, often filled with cream or fruit.

Beyond its natural sweetness, honey has been valued for its medicinal properties, such as its ability to soothe sore throats, aid digestion, and promote healing due to its antibacterial and antioxidant qualities. Different varieties of honey serve different purposes, including linden honey used to induce sweating during flu, chamomile honey for digestive problems, and honey with St. John's Wort is still used today to treat mild anxiety and depression among families. Honey products continue to be used widely in Poland as well: propolis-based products containing antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, and antioxidant properties are made into tinctures and powders and mixed with honey to create medicines for respiratory infections.¹⁰ Other bee products, such as bee pollen and royal jelly, are likewise consumed with honey and used as a folk or traditional medicine referred to as *miodolecznictwo* or apitherapy, which is a natural method of treatment and health-support using bee products. Certainly, consumption of non-edible products like wax and propolis-based balms, salves, and candles, are also incorporated into everyday routines to promote well-being, with their use deeply rooted in cultural traditions and holistic approaches to health and local food systems. These examples demonstrate the versatile role that honey has played in both Polish cuisine and traditional medicine, linking the country's culinary heritage to its natural environment and apiary practices.

Additionally, tree-beekeeping contributes to sustainable livelihoods by creating economic opportunities that build on this heritage. Many beekeepers today are exploring innovative ways to market their skills, as well as the honey. For example, in Augustów, Poland, founders of the 'Tree-beekeeping Brotherhood' have created a *miodsytnia*, a meadery known for producing high-quality honey-based alcoholic beverages like mead and beer. Located in a largely-forested region of eastern Poland, the meadery combines old recipes with modern production techniques to create a variety of meads, from sweet to semi-dry, as well as honeys, some from tree-hives,

¹⁰ Instytut Zielařstwa, Poland, personal communication, August 2024.

which can sell from fifty to one thousand euros. The *miodsytnia* also offers guided tours at its on-site museum where visitors can learn about the mead-making process as well as about the history of tree-beekeeping and its traditions.¹¹ These new economic pathways, such as eco-tourism or artisanal honey production, demonstrate how innovation and tradition can coexist, offering a new model for a livelihood that is rooted in this cultural heritage element.

Honey produced through tree-beekeeping is not only a vital component of local food systems but also a cornerstone of the nations culinary heritage. Festivals such as the Festival of Taste in Gruczno, Poland, celebrate the rich diversity of local foods, with honey playing a central role. The honey competition at the festival celebrates the rich diversity of honey produced by local apiarists, allowing participants to sample various types while learning about their unique flavours and innovative characteristics. The events at Gruczno, which recently began including workshops to revitalise tree-beekeeping in the region, highlight how the practice preserves not only food traditions, but also intangible cultural heritage elements that have been passed down through generations, allowing communities to maintain a sense of identity and cultural practices tied to their environment.

TREE-BEEKEEPING'S ROLE IN FOOD SYSTEMS AND CULTURAL FOODSCAPES

As tree-beekeeping does not produce a lot of honey, the practice is thus not financially lucrative. While the tree-beekeepers may have up to twenty hives (most have somewhere between 5 and 15), they obtain only about one to five kgs of honey per year from all hives.¹² This number, however, varies each year as the amount of the acquired honey is dependent on the health of the bee families, and in 2024, for example, very little honey was taken from the hives as the bees needed the honey to survive the winter.¹³ Contemporary tree-beekeeping therefore, is not about profitable honey production, but rather about a love for bees and other pollinators. Despite its unprofitability for humans, the practice plays a crucial role in the food system by supporting biodiversity in forests. Indeed, forest landscapes are often overlooked as 'food environments,' sustaining the idea that food production and supply are inherently tied to agricultural landscapes. This agrocentric perspective centres on

11 Author's field notes, and personal communication from Piotr Piłasiewicz, April 2024.

12 Presentation by Andrzej Pazura at 'Tree-Beekeeping Conference', Koło, Poland 19 October 2024.

13 Personal communication with Andrzej Pazura and Barbara Zajdel, 30 October 2024.

the cultivation of crops and the domestication of animals within human-modified environments like farmlands and pastures, where intensive agricultural practices dominate. Agrocentrism marginalises and overlooks the role of forests and other ecosystems in sustaining food systems, shaping policies, economies, and cultural norms reinforcing a connection between food and managed landscapes. As a result, agricultural spaces are often celebrated as the primary source of food, overshadowing the diverse contributions of forests, wetlands, and wild landscapes in supporting nutrition and livelihoods.

Nevertheless, forest ecosystems and watersheds are living cultural landscapes, shaped by human activity, where traditions, knowledge, and practices are deeply embedded and where intangible cultural heritage elements – like tree-beekeeping – play an important role in driving food systems and culinary heritage. Beyond honey, forests provide vital food sources such as wild fruits, nuts, mushrooms, roots, and edible plants, and tree-beekeeping is one intangible cultural heritage element that transforms these forests into spaces as expressions of living heritage and living foodways.¹⁴ Through tree-beekeeping, forests serve as both an economic and cultural resource, integrating human knowledge with natural processes, permitting the sustainable use of forest resources without depleting them. In this context, a forest functions as more than a ‘wilderness’ devoid of human presence – it is a cultural landscape that reflects socio-ecological values, ecological wisdom, and a dynamic interaction between ecology, culinary heritage and food systems.

In this context, tree-beekeeping, specifically putting culture in nature more explicitly, influences forestry practices because it advocates for sustainable approaches to forest management that enhance pollinator health, preserves genetic diversity, and protects old-growth trees. All of these are needed for tree-beekeeping as well as for biodiversity. As the forestry sector increasingly (and often reluctantly!) adopts such comprehensive ecological attitudes, tree-beekeepers play a pivotal role in showcasing exactly just how their socio-ecological knowledge and practices contribute to (and enhance) sustainable forest management. By prioritising the well-being of pollinators, tree-beekeeping not only supports innovative economies but also ensures the resilience of forest landscapes and food systems. This interplay between heritage-inspired practices and environmental stewardship approaches, highlights the

14 Information from Edyta Szast & Krysia Dudek workshop on ‘Forest Gifts’, Toruń, Poland, 22 October 2024.; Lecture by Łukasz Łuczaj: ‘Postrzeganie ziół w medycynie ludowej. Dawne i ludowe formy leków’ (‘Perception of herbs in folk medicine. Ancient and folk forms of medicines’), Biskupiec, Poland, 4 August 2024.

integral relationship between cultural heritage and food security, emphasising the role of ICH in fostering intergenerational traditions and livelihoods.

CONCLUSION

Tree-beekeeping is not only about maintaining a unique culinary tradition but also about safeguarding biodiversity and fostering living heritage that connects contemporary culinary practices with centuries-old sustainable economies. As our future generations face environmental and climate challenges, including food scarcity, the forests' roles in nutrition remain underappreciated. Tree-beekeeping offers one model for integrating human activities within boreal forest ecosystems, demonstrating how ICH practices can respond to modern threats and shift our understanding of 'food landscapes.' At its core, tree-beekeeping exemplifies the convergence of ecological and cultural knowledge, serving as a reminder of the deep connections between people, their cultural heritage, and the natural world that feeds us; a world that is often perceived as 'empty.' The practice symbolises a profound relationship between humans and nature that embodies a holistic understanding of interdependence, stewardship, and the intricate tapestry of human experience woven into the landscapes we often overlook.

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ANTONIA MATALAS AND ANASTASIA NTANTOU

HEALTH CLAIMS FOR TRADITIONAL FERMENTED FOODS

ABSTRACT

Traditional fermented food products were empirically developed to render perishable edible as well as non-edible raw material into products which have a prolonged lifetime. Moreover, fermentation, via metabolic enzymatic reactions, adds to taste or texture, while it enhances the nutritional value of raw material by producing vitamins and bioactive metabolites, and by ridding foodstuffs of their anti-nutrients. With the increasing evidence that some bacteria, known as probiotics, can be beneficial to human health, interest in fermented foods has recently greatly increased. Nutrition and health claims are labeling packaged food products with the intention of positively influencing consumer perceptions about them. To inform and to protect consumers from misleading information, the European Commission has put in place a legislative framework regulating all nutrition and health-related claims which may be labeling food products. Official approval of a health claim for a food is granted following strict standards, and requires sufficient experimental and clinical evidence for this purpose. Drawing from the progress achieved within the 'PIMENTO' – an ongoing European action aiming at valorising fermented foods – yogurt is employed as a case-study for demonstrating the way in which traditional foods may benefit by obtaining an official claim about their health-promoting properties.

HEALTH-PROMOTING PROPERTIES AND OTHER BENEFITS OF FERMENTED FOODS

Foods¹ that are made via a fermentation process represent a greatly diversified group of foods that have contributed to sustenance and food security throughout human

1 Reference to this study: Antonia Matalas and Anastasia Ntantou: Health claims for traditional fermented foods. In Anikó Báti and Patricia Lysaght (eds.): *Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the*

history.² Fermented foods were developed by practically every human culture worldwide to render perishable edible and non-edible raw material into food products with a prolonged lifetime. They are defined as foods or beverages produced through controlled microbial growth, and the conversion of food components through enzymatic action. Fermentation adds to taste by producing flavourful bacterial metabolites or texture by breaking down carbohydrates and other components. In many traditional societies, fermentation contributes to food security in times of shortage. As an example, in Indonesia, the residues of groundnut press cake and tapioca are often fermented to produce nutritious foods, namely *tempte-bongrek* and *ontjom* – foods that are important in the daily regimen of the poorest individuals¹ – while *koumiss* had been used as a safe and easy way to transport beverage for nomadic populations of Central Asia, who had to travel very often to places with variations in climatic and environmental conditions. *Kawal*, a fermented product made from the leaves of a wild African legume, is believed to have helped children and adults in Sudan to endure the 1983–1985 famine. In a context in which biodiversity is decreasing worldwide, a body of evidence positively associates dietary diversity with human health.³ Therefore, there is a critical need to maintain and improve food as a source of diverse beneficial microbiota and nutrients in times when diets are drastically changing towards highly-processed foods. Another urgent challenge is the transition towards more sustainable diets. This transition resonates with the growing consumer demand for natural and healthier products that are available at affordable prices.⁴

In recent years, fermented foods have undergone a surge in popularity, mainly due to their proposed health benefits. Fermented foods can also meet the urgent demands outlined above, owing to their unique properties,⁵ which include the presence of live microorganisms and microbial metabolites and bioactive

Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage. Budapest: ELTE RCH Institute of Ethnology – Museum of Ethnography, 2025. pp. 445–453.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61380/978-963-567-084-0-28>

2 Tamang, Jyoti P. – Cotter, Paul D. and Endo, Akihito et al.: 'Fermented foods in a global age: East meets West, *Comprehensive Reviews of Food Science and Food Safety* 19/1 (2020), 184–217.

3 Wahlqvist, Mark L.: 'Regional food diversity and human health', *Asia Pacific Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 12/3 (2003), 304–308; Kant, A. K. – Schatzkin, A. and Ziegler, R. G.: 'Dietary diversity and subsequent cause-specific mortality in the NHANES I epidemiologic follow-up study', *Journal of the American College of Nutrition* 14/3 (1995), 233–238.

4 Alsubhi, Moosa – Blake, Miranda and Nguyen, Tan et al.: 'Consumer willingness to pay for healthier food products: A systematic review', *Obesity Reviews* 24/1 (2023), e13525.

5 Marco, Maria L. – Heeney, Dustin – Binda, Sylvie et al.: 'Health benefits of fermented foods: microbiota and beyond', *Current Opinion Biotechnology* 44 (2017), 94–102.

compounds, as well as the minimal quantities of energy required for their production and preservation. To fully realise their potential, fermented foods must ultimately be integrated into effective public health and sustainability policies.⁶ To this end, there is a need for the coordination of the wealth of scientific knowledge on fermented foods emerging from the studies on food ecosystems, food microbiology, as well as on the role of gut microbiota in health and on disease onset.

Compared to other components of the human diet, fermented foods add a unique dimension to the relationship between diet and health because of the fermentative microorganisms and the products of fermentation that they contain, in addition to the various macro- and micronutrients classically studied by nutritionists. Although nutrition science is an interdisciplinary field, published research reports are often characterised by a limitation of scope, resulting in a lack of holistic assessment of the complex array of elements that characterise the interaction of food components with the human body. This fragmented approach to nutrition research makes it difficult to objectively characterise the health properties of diets, foods, or nutrients. The European action PIMENTO, with its third Working Group,⁷ aims at evaluating the health-promoting potential of fermented foods while adopting an interdisciplinary approach to its work.

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR HEALTH CLAIMS

A pragmatic, yet an innovative approach for the academic sector in order to tackle the health properties of diets, is to use the regulatory framework of the European Commission that regulates nutrition and health-related claims which appear on the labels of food products, in order to inform and to protect consumers from misleading information.⁸ The relevant ‘European Food Safety Authority’ (EFSA) guidelines for

6 Mukherjee, Arghya – Gómez-Sala, Beatrix and O’Connor, Eibhlís M. et al.: ‘Global Regulatory Frameworks for Fermented Foods: A Review’, *Frontiers Nutrition* 9 (2022), 902642; Farnworth Edward R.: ‘The evidence to support health claims for probiotics’, *Journal of Nutrition* 138 (2008), 1250S-4S.

7 PIMENTO is a European Union funded scientific network for the promotion of fermented foods. Information on its aims, participants, and results, are available in its website: <https://fermentedfoods.eu/>.

8 Nutrition and health-claims for packaged foods are regulated by the European Parliament and European Council regulation n° 1924/2006; see: Turck, Dominique – Bresson, Jean-Louis and Burlingame, Barbara et al.: ‘Scientific and technical guidance for the preparation and presentation of a health claim application (Revision 2)’, *EFSA Journal* 15 (2017), e04680; EFSA (2021) ‘General scientific guidance for stakeholders on health claim applications (Revision 1)’, *EFSA Journal* 19/3 (2021), e06553.

the preparation and presentation of a health claim, require not only that the results of human studies are systematically reported and evaluated, but also that this information is complemented by an assessment of the properties of a food or ingredient for which the effect is claimed. This characterisation comprises information on the composition and stability of the active compounds in the food in question. Furthermore, EFSA requires additional data on the mechanism of action to be provided, derived from studies conducted *in vitro* or in animal models, while the experimental evidence required to support health claims also includes data derived from clinical interventions in humans. Thus, the authorisation process for a health claim is both a long and a costly one.

The first qualified health claim to be made by a conventional food was in 2008; the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) gave permission for packed peanuts, almonds, hazelnuts, pecans, pistachios and walnuts to carry a label touting their heart-healthy effects, that reads: 'Scientific evidence suggests but does not prove that eating 1.5 ounces of most nuts (a small handful), as part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol, may reduce the risk of heart disease.' In Europe, the relevant regulatory framework was put in place in 2006; notably, the first products for which applications were submitted for a health claim, were novel foods in which microorganisms that qualify as probiotics had been added. However, as of 2025, no probiotic food product is sold in the European Union that carries a label health claim, although there are quite a few probiotic bacteria which are generally accepted as safe. The public debate over the reluctance of EFSA to authorise health claims for probiotics is exemplified by a series of articles in the mass media and in the popular press (Fig. 1). In this respect, there are discrepancies across different countries in implementing the principles of food safety with respect to foods that contain probiotics. More notably, the health regulatory agency of Japan has approved health claims for over 20 probiotic products in accordance with the Japanese 'Foods for Specific Health Use' system, implementing a more lenient regulatory framework.⁹

HEALTH CLAIMS FOR FERMENTED MILKS

Among the various fermented foods, fermented dairy products constitute the group whose microbiological constituents and impact on health are better understood.

⁹ Farnworth, Edward R.: 'The evidence to support health claims for probiotics', *Journal of Nutrition* (2008), 138, 1250S-4S.

Many fermented milks contain live cultures of bacteria; as the health benefits of ingested live bacteria have become evident, these products seek a way of obtaining an authorised health-claim label. Thus, several health claims have been put forward by interested parties for products such as yogurt, kefir and buttermilk. Nevertheless, securing official approval for a new health claim can be arduous. Approval of a nutrition or a health claim for a dairy product, following the strictly-regulated framework described above, limits the potential for foods that are made via an artisanal process, such as traditional dairy products, to present the evidence needed. In the EU and in the United States of America (USA), two different health claims have been substantiated for fermented milks, concerning their beneficial effects on gastrointestinal health on the one hand, and on metabolic health, on the other. These are presented in detail in the following paragraphs.

Fermented products positively modulate gastrointestinal health through diverse mechanisms, including the potential probiotic effect of their constituent microbes, reduction of antinutrients in foodstuffs, and bioactivity of bioactive compounds produced during fermentation.¹⁰ It is notable that several probiotic microbes, which are often closely related to those found in fermented dairy products, have been shown to be beneficial in the management of gastrointestinal symptoms in different populations, such as pregnant women, athletes, and patients with irritable bowel syndrome and neurodegenerative disorders.¹¹ Based on the findings of fourteen clinical intervention studies, and guided by the 'Guidance on the scientific requirements for health claims related to the immune system, the gastrointestinal tract and defence against pathogenic microorganisms', EFSA considered a health claim for the alleviation of gastrointestinal discomfort related to lactose intolerance by live cultures in yogurt and yoghurt-like fermented milks. Based on the scientific evidence presented, the experts panel concluded that 'live yoghurt cultures' are sufficiently characterised in relation to the claimed effect, and EFSA proposed the following wording to best reflect the scientific evidence: 'Live yoghurt cultures in yoghurt improve digestion of lactose in yoghurt in individuals with lactose maldigestion'.¹² To support the claim, the yoghurt should contain at least a minimum

10 Dimidi, Eirini – Cox, Selina R. and Rossi, Megan et al.: 'Fermented Foods: Definitions and Characteristics, Impact on the Gut Microbiota and Effects on Gastrointestinal Health and Disease', *Nutrients* 11/8 (2019), 1806–1814.

11 Hungin, A.P.S. – Mitchell, C.R. and Whorwell, P. et al.: 'Systematic review: probiotics in the management of lower gastrointestinal symptoms – an updated evidence-based international consensus', *Aliment Pharmacological Therapy* 47/8 (2018), 1054–1070.

12 EFSA Panel on Dietetic Products, Nutrition and Allergies (2010). 'Scientific Opinion on the substantiation of health claims related to live yoghurt cultures and improved lactose digestion

amount of live starter microorganisms in question (10^8 CFU from the species *Lactobacillus delbrueckii* subsp. *bulgaricus* and *Streptococcus thermophilus* per gram¹³). The claim is intended to assist individuals with lactose maldigestion. Although there is growing evidence about the impact of fermented dairy consumption on gastrointestinal issues in healthy adults, so far, no official approval has been granted to statements about causal relationships with digestive discomforts other than the one related to lactose intolerance.

The second health claim for yogurt which was recently approved in the USA relates to Type II diabetes. Type II diabetes is one of the major diseases among metabolic disorders; its prevalence is rising worldwide, and it represents a significant burden for the public health system.¹⁴ Several studies have examined the effect of specific fermented milks on parameters of diabetes, such as glycaemia and insulin resistance. In this context, the aim of a systematic review of the effects of the consumption of different fermented foods on glucose homeostasis in healthy populations, was to assess whether the regular consumption of fermented foods has a positive impact on Type II diabetes in healthy adults without the need to use medication, and the FDA concluded that: 'Eating yogurt regularly, at least 2 cups (3 servings) per week, may reduce the risk of Type 2 diabetes according to limited scientific evidence.'¹⁵

Another area in which fermented milks have received attention deserves to be mentioned, namely, the immunity of the human body. The term immunity refers to safeguarding against pathogenic diseases through the prevention of dysbiosis. The composition of the community of microbial residents influences a balanced immune response of the human organism. As this is true for every part of the human body, it also holds true for the female genital system. Bacterial vaginosis and vulvovaginal candidiasis are common pathogenic conditions for women that cause discomfort and interfere with everyday activities, while they also result in increased susceptibility to other infections or risk of obstetric complications.¹⁶ Both conditions arise when

(ID 1143, 2976) pursuant to Article 13(1) of Regulation (EC) No 1924/2006; *EFSA Journal* 8 (2010), 1763–1780.

13 CFU: Colony forming unit.

14 Ogurtsova, Katherine – Guariguata, Leonor and Barengo, Noël C. et al.: 'IDF diabetes Atlas: Global estimates of undiagnosed diabetes in adults for 2021'; *Diabetes Research Clinical Practice* 183 (2022), 109–118.

15 FDA (2024). 'FDA Announces Qualified Health Claim for Yogurt and Reduced Risk of Type 2 Diabetes' <<https://www.fda.gov/food/hfp-constituent-updates/fda-announces-qualified-health-claim-yogurt-and-reduced-risk-type-2-diabetes>> accessed 22 January 2025.

16 Todorovic, Smilja et al.: 'Health benefits and risks of fermented foods – the PIMENTO initiative. *Frontiers Nutrition* 11 (2024), 1458536.

the natural microflora is disturbed; increasing the proportion of *Lactobacilli*, and decreasing the proportion of potentially pathogenic bacteria or yeasts in the vagina, become the targets for prevention and treatment of both conditions. Clinical studies have demonstrated the efficacy of oral administration of certain probiotics, while a few suggest the beneficial effects of the consumption of fermented foods for the prevention and treatment of vaginitis. However, clinical sciences and food sciences take a distinct approach to the use of bacteria, with the former focusing on efficacy studies involving probiotic strains as supplements, and the latter employing the same strains as culture organisms to ferment food matrices. The PIMENTO work-team is currently addressing this gap in knowledge by compiling and evaluating meaningful clinical data on the way in which consumption of fermented milks can contribute to the prevention and treatment of vaginitis. The outcome of this systematic review could create the basis for the substantiation of a new health claim for yogurt and other fermented milks.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Health claims are used on the labels of packaged food products with the intention of positively influencing consumer perceptions about these foods. However, as consumers must be protected from false claims about the properties of various foodstuffs, the substantiation of health claims destined to be used by food products is a challenging and sensitive issue. In this context, EFSA in the EU, is tasked with providing expert analysis and scientific evaluation of risks, as well as information, to all interested sectors and to the public in general.

Present in all diets, fermented foods hold a strategic place due to the benefits they offer in terms of sustenance, cultural heritage, innovation, sustainability, and consumer interest. Fermented foods differ in many ways from mass-produced foods currently consumed in modern societies; due to the fermentation process they have unique sensorial properties and enhanced nutritional value. The scientific literature suggests that consuming foods like koumiss, kimchi, sauerkraut, and tempeh, may positively affect health, including leading to improvements in triglycerides and cholesterol levels, an increase in high-density lipoprotein cholesterol, improvement blood glucose control, and improvement in overall well-being. Milk-based fermented drinks – apart from being a good source of milk, deprived of its lactose content –

also contain bioactive compounds and often, live cultures.¹⁷ However, despite the importance of the various traditional fermented products produced in sustaining people around the world, their health-promoting properties, associated with their consumption, are not yet well studied.

From the above it becomes evident that the potential of fermented foods as part of modern diets is highly relevant. As traditional fermented foods are often of an artisanal nature and thus at risk of disappearing, together with the diversity of native microorganisms used in their production, due to urbanisation and changing food habits, their valorisation by national and international organisations would represent a meaningful future policy.

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¹⁷ Baschali, Aristeia – Tsakalidou, Effie – Kyriacou, Adamantini – Karavasiloglou, Nena and Matalas, Antonia-Leda: ‘Traditional low-alcoholic and non-alcoholic fermented beverages consumed in European countries: A neglected food group’, *Nutrition Research Reviews* 30 (2017), 1–24.

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JAMES I. DEUTSCH AND FAE R. RAUBER

FOODWAYS IN THE HOBO JUNGLES

HERITAGE AND TRADITION AMONG THE UNHOUSED IN THE UNITED STATES IN THE LATE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES

ABSTRACT

The iconic dish of hobo jungles in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century was mulligan stew, in which anything and everything on hand was thrown into a communal pot for all to share. The dish symbolised the distinctive culture of the unhoused in which mutual aid and cooperation coexist with independence, resourcefulness, and freedom.

The late 19th and early 20th centuries saw the flowering of what some scholars have termed Hobohemia, in which tens of thousands of unhoused individuals migrated across the United States, often by hopping on freight trains and then gathering in camps known as ‘hobo jungles’ where they socialised and regularly shared meals.¹ In this article, we maintain that ‘mulligan stew’, perhaps the most emblematic of those shared meals, represents not only the democratic mixing of diverse ingredients thrown together in a large pot over a fire that rarely extinguishes, but also the mixing of diverse individuals in the hobo jungles, where according to Nels Anderson (1889–1986), one of Hobohemia’s foremost scholars, ‘Absolute democracy reigns’.²

1 Reference to this study: James I. Deutsch and Fae R. Rauber: Foodways in the Hobo Jungles: Heritage and Tradition among the Unhoused in the United States in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries. In Anikó Bádi and Patricia Lysaght (eds.): *Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage*. Budapest: ELTE RCH Institute of Ethnology – Museum of Ethnography, 2025. pp. 455–461.

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2 Anderson, Nels: *The Hobo: The Sociology of the Homeless Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1923), 19.

Anderson's pioneering ethnographic study of Hobohemia – which also served as his master's dissertation in sociology at the University of Chicago – offers several definitions of 'the homeless man.' One of those most often cited comes from the anarchist-physician Dr. Ben L. Reitman (1879–1943): 'There are three types of the genus vagrant: the hobo, the tramp, and the bum. The hobo works and wanders, the tramp dreams and wanders and the bum drinks and wanders.'³ One similar categorisation – admittedly less poetic than Reitman's but using those same 'three types' – defines hoboes as 'migrant workers,' tramps as 'migrant non-workers,' and bums as 'non-migrant, non-workers.'⁴ The words for those three types have been in circulation for at least 140 years, according to the authoritative *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*). For instance, the word 'hobo,' which the *OED* dates to 1885, may have 'originated as a conversion of an interjection used as a greeting or to attract attention,' as in 'ho boy' or 'ho beau.'⁵ The word 'bum' in the sense of 'a person without a settled home regarded as an idler or scrounger' may date to 1864, according to the *OED*.⁶ Oldest of all is the word 'tramp,' in the sense of 'one who travels from place to place on foot, in search of employment, or as a vagrant,' which the *OED* dates to 1664.⁷

Whether Hobohemia's denizens differentiated among themselves in these ways is debatable. However, what seems clear is that those who are unhoused constitute an occupational folk group as much as any other occupational category, such as actuaries, biologists, cowboys, dishwashers, engineers, firefighters, gaffers, and haberdashers – to take only the first eight letters of the alphabet. The unhoused possess their own sets of skills, traditions, specialised knowledge, daily patterns, attitudes towards work, and codes of behaviour that not only distinguish them from other occupational groups, but that also meet their needs as a community. Two fundamental elements of their folk culture are 1) the places where they gather to reinforce their senses of community; and 2) their foodways, which we define as what they eat, how they prepare their meals; and how they consume their meals.

3 Anderson: *The Hobo*, 87.

4 Deutsch, James I.: 'Non-Traveling Subjects and their Non-Journeys: The Phenomenon of Homelessness in the United States,' in Ferens, Dominika – Kociatkiewicz, Justyna and Klimek-Dominiak, Elzbieta eds.: *Traveling Subjects: American Journeys in Space and Time* (Kraków: Rabid, 2004), 277.

5 'Hobo' in *Oxford English Dictionary* online <<https://www.oed.com>> accessed 24 October 2024.

6 'Bum' in *Oxford English Dictionary* online <<https://www.oed.com>> accessed 24 October 2024.

7 'Tramp' in *Oxford English Dictionary* online <<https://www.oed.com>> accessed 24 October 2024.

The primary locus for unhoused individuals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the 'jungle' or 'hobo jungle'. According to Nels Anderson, 'Jungles are usually located in close proximity to a railroad division point, where the trains are made up or where trains stop to change crews and engines.'⁸ Anderson goes on to explain that the jungle 'should be located in a dry and shady place that permits sleeping on the ground. There should be plenty of water for cooking and bathing and wood enough to keep the pot boiling.'⁹

Because legal authorities could raid a jungle at any time – 'to arrest or beat up the lodgers [...] and [...] to tear down their shelters and riddle their cooking pots with bullet holes'¹⁰ – most jungles were 'ephemeral' and 'makeshift', using materials that were 'extemporized out of any oddments and materials within snaffling distance.'¹¹ For example, a 'fireman's broken shovel or discarded tie plates' became 'substitute frying pans'; 'bent wire' functioned as meat kebabs; and 'tomato cans or sardine cans' served as 'plates for the stew.'¹² Not surprisingly, the jungle's vulnerability to raids is akin to contemporary sweeps of the unhoused, in which 'law enforcement officials and sanitation workers may descend – sometimes without warning – upon areas where homeless people are congregating, thereby either forcing the homeless to move elsewhere or arresting them for outstanding warrants or for minor offenses, such as vagrancy and loitering.'¹³

Their ephemerality, notwithstanding, the jungles were on one hand 'marvels of cooperation' and places of 'reciprocity and mutualism' that served as 'surrogates for the settled working-class communities they had abandoned.'¹⁴ However, any idealistic notions of utopia were similarly ephemeral:

the cooperative structure of jungle camps and hobo life in general derived more from necessity than from a shared romance of the road. Put simply, hoboes lacked the support networks usually available to residentially stable workers. In

8 Anderson: *The Hobo*, 16.

9 Anderson: *The Hobo*, 17.

10 Allsop, Kenneth: *Hard Travellin': The Hobo and His History* (New York: New American Library, 1967), 165.

11 Allsop: *Hard Travellin'*, 165.

12 Allsop: *Hard Travellin'*, 165–166.

13 Deutsch, James I.: 'City-Wide Sweeps of the Homeless', in Arrigo, Bruce A. ed., *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Surveillance, Security, and Privacy* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2018), 170.

14 DePastino, Todd: *Citizen Hobo: How a Century of Homelessness Shaped America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 70.

a world of strangers, migrants drew upon their class experiences to improvise new forms of obligation and mutual aid.¹⁵

One of the best examples of ‘reciprocity and mutualism’ appears in the jungle’s iconic dish, known as ‘mulligan stew’ – a name that the *Oxford English Dictionary* attributes to a proper name, ‘perhaps arising from an alteration of Irish stew, by substitution of *Mulligan* as a common Irish surname.’¹⁶ A number of sources offer vivid images of the materiality of making a ‘mulligan’ while simultaneously offering a glimpse into the reciprocal communality of foodways within the jungles. Most references to mulligan stew come from either anecdotal or fictionalised accounts of hoboes’ lives, but there are also several scholarly accounts of life in the jungles.

The adaptability of the mulligan was the dish’s chief strength – anything and everything on hand could be thrown into a communal pot, stewed as long as necessary, and served up for those surrounding. For example, car repairman and democratically elected ‘King of the Hoboes,’ Gordon ‘Bud’ Filer, told the *Penn Central Post* in 1969 that ‘We put in every kind of meat and vegetable imaginable. And we never stop cooking it. When I say we throw everything in, I’m assuming you know about the rule: No socks.’¹⁷ This openness to ingredients is echoed throughout the literature on hobo jungles, especially in the best-known autobiographies of hobo life. *The Trail of a Tramp* (1913) by Leon Livingston (aka A-No. 1, 1872–1944) introduces mulligan as a dish that ‘is made by stewing in a large tin can almost everything edible over a slow fire.’¹⁸ *Beggars of Life* (1924) by Jim Tully (1886–1947) describes a mulligan as ‘a combination of nearly everything cookable.’¹⁹ The malleability of a mulligan’s ingredients was necessary for a population with limited and inconsistent access to foodstuffs and accordingly became the feature of the dish most often highlighted in literary descriptions.

The strong sense of community among the unhoused meant that a mulligan’s preparation was thoroughly collaborative; all in the camp contributed to it – a fact that a number of texts took pains to emphasise. For instance, journalist and historian Kenneth Allsop (1920–1973), in *Hard Travellin’: The Hobo and His History* (1967), writes that mulligan ‘is kept perpetually replenished by contributions from all, hoppins, or vegetables, and gumps – meat of any description, butchers’ scraps,

15 DePastino: *Citizen Hobo*, 70.

16 ‘Mulligan Stew’ in *Oxford English Dictionary* online <<https://www.oed.com>> accessed 24 October 2024. Emphasis in the original.

17 ‘King of the Hoboes,’ *Penn Central Post* (November 1969), 6.

18 Livingston, Leon Ray: *The Trail of a Tramp* (Erie: A-No 1 Publishing Company, 1913), 52.

19 Tully, Jim: *Beggars of Life* (New York: Albert & Charles Boni, 1924), 314.

bacon rinds, the occasional rustled chicken. All render down into a mess which may vary in savoriness, but which is always hot.’²⁰ Similarly, James Freels – a hobo quoted in Cliff Williams’ *One More Train to Ride: The Underground World of Modern American Hoboes* (2003) – observes that ‘everyone contributed to the ingredients. [...] As people come along to eat the stew, the charge was one item contributed to the pot.’²¹ More colourfully, Livingston in *The Trail of a Tramp* describes a scene in which members of the jungle are tasked with scrounging specific food items to contribute to the mulligan pot. He writes that ‘in accordance with a custom of the Road every camper drawing a marked slip was under obligation to immediately leave the camp and return there with the necessities he had found enumerated on his docket.’²² Livingston goes on to explain that, should a man return to camp without the item on his docket and unable to provide a ‘reasonable excuse’ for its absence, he would then be expelled from the camp ‘by means so forcible that his disgrace was all the more painfully brought home to him.’²³ The expectation of a contribution to the pot was so embedded in the traditions of the jungle that to fail that task was to risk violent eviction by the folk group. Whether or not any hobo was ever sent out with orders as specific as ‘two pounds of granulated sugar, a carton of coffee and two half-gallon cans of tomatoes’ – as Livingston depicts – is doubtful, but the reference to such an unquestioned expectation of a contribution confirms the broader culture of communal interdependence in the jungles.²⁴

Not only were the materials sourced collectively, but nearly every step of the cooking process was done as a group. In his master’s thesis in economics, ‘The Casual Laborer of California’ (1922), Towne Joseph Nylander (1896–1976) described a kind of ‘communistic society’ wherein the men ‘all [cooked] over the central camp-fire, and all contribute food to the general mess.’²⁵ Similarly, Tully wrote that ‘a half dozen fires burned, and hoboes worked like an army of cooks over them. Some brought water from the creek, while others peeled potatoes, and prepared meat for the skillets.’²⁶ Nels Anderson, too, painted a picture of a deeply collaborative environment, writing that ‘while some of the men are busily engaged in cooking, others are sewing and

20 Allsop: *Hard Travellin’*, 165.

21 Williams, Cliff: *One More Train to Ride: The Underground World of Modern American Hoboes* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 79.

22 Livingston: *The Trail of a Tramp*, 50.

23 Livingston: *The Trail of a Tramp*, 50.

24 Livingston: *The Trail of a Tramp*, 50.

25 Nylander, Towne Joseph: *The Casual Laborer of California* (M.A. thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1922), 51.

26 Tully: *Beggars of Life*, 253.

mending their clothes or shoes, and still others are shaving [...] After supper, pans and cans are cleaned out, the paper is read and passes the rounds.²⁷ The extent to which the making of a mulligan was a truly collective endeavour is evidenced by the concurrence of texts describing such expansive cooperation at every level of the process. The labour did not start and stop with the cooking pot, but was spread evenly throughout the jungle.

Within the hobo jungles, mulligan stew served as a touchstone for this culture of interdependence, acting not only as a metaphorical representation of the culture's democratic foundations, but also as an opportunity for the unhoused to experience and create the culture of their jungles. As such, mulligan stew may symbolise the distinctive culture of the hobo jungles, where diverse individuals contribute to the whole in a process that embodies not only equality and democracy but also individualism and freedom.

Moreover, the example of mulligan stew confirms how the study of foodways may yield insight into the values, realities, and relationships within a particular community. As Michael A. Di Giovine and Ronda L. Brulotte note in their introduction to *Edible Identities: Food as Cultural Heritage* (2014), food not only 'binds people together', but also links 'members of society together through space and time, serving as referential touchstones for a group's self-identification [...] and representing the group to outsiders.'²⁸

The symbolism inherent in mulligan stew – both literal and metaphorical – thereby illustrates the binding and linking of community members, in this case the community of unhoused at the turn of the twentieth century in the United States. The egalitarian participation at the core of making a mulligan reflects the foundational presumption of equality in the jungle. Whether contributing a chicken or an egg to the pot, most important was each individual's concrete demonstration of commitment to the democratic structure of mutual aid that sustained lifeways in the jungles.

The democratic principles of cooperation, reciprocity, and mutual support were foundational to life in the hobo jungles. The equality of the ingredients reflected that of the individuals supplying them, thereby creating a network of cooperation that

27 Anderson: *The Hobo*, 24.

28 Di Giovine, Michael A. and Brulotte, Ronda L.: 'Introduction: Food and Foodways as Cultural Heritage', in Brulotte, Ronda L. and Di Giovine, Michael A., eds.: *Edible Identities: Food as Cultural Heritage* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2016), 1.

allowed its members – without any other means of support – to create their own mutual-aid structure and to maintain their own lives of freedom and movement. That very culture of inter-reliance allowed for the striking independence, resourcefulness, and freedom that marked the lives of those at the root of Hobohemia.

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PART VII:
DEALING WITH FOOD IN
INSTITUTIONS AND
ORGANISATIONS WORKING
WITH CULTURAL HERITAGE II



ZSUZSANNA NAGYNÉ BATÁRI

FOOD HERITAGE IN AN OPEN AIR MUSEUM CONTEXT: RESEARCH, REPRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

A CASE STUDY OF THE HUNGARIAN OPEN AIR MUSEUM

ABSTRACT

This paper is about the research, representation and interpretation methods of the Hungarian Open Air Museum regarding food heritage. The museum applies several methods to mediate authentic information for a wide audience in an enjoyable way. Thus, food is part of reconstructed interiors in the museum houses, of thematic indoor exhibitions in the museum gallery spaces, of museum education programmes offered for different age groups, as well as being part of wellbeing and reintegration events, workshops of different kinds, and of publications and festivals. It can also be the central topic of our so-called ‘active venues’, which offer interactive experience in the museum buildings.

INTRODUCTION

In my paper¹ I aim to shed light on how food heritage is embedded in open air museum representation, and how research is conducted in order to realise an authentic display and interpretation in this context. For this, I rely on the experience gained at the Hungarian Open Air Museum, Szentendre.²

1 Reference to this study: Zsuzsanna Nagyné Batári: Food Heritage in an Open Air Museum Context: Research, Representation and Interpretation. A case study of the Hungarian Open Air Museum. In Anikó Bati and Patricia Lysaght (eds.): *Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage*. Budapest: ELTE RCH Institute of Ethnology – Museum of Ethnography, 2025. pp. 465–480.

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2 The museum is called ‘Skanzen from Szentendre’. The name of this institution type derives from the Swedish Skansen, in Stockholm, which was the first open air museum of this kind.

An outdoor museum makes it possible to mediate food-related content in a uniquely complex way, which is not easily managed in other kinds of museums. There is a wide range of methods by which information can be represented in an outdoor museum environment, providing context, experience and learning opportunities. Food heritage representation includes the research and presentation of different food types, recipes, cooking practices, the utensils necessary for the preparation of dishes, the raw materials used, the storage of food and various ingredients, the daily routine of eating and the customs related thereto, as well as the regional and social varieties of all the above-mentioned aspects. Besides, the Hungarian Open Air Museum also recalls the interiors of grocery shops of the past, and there are also several places where visitors can eat – an inn, a tavern, a railway restaurant, and a coffee house – which are also important concerning food heritage, as their menus can be connected to food heritage research.

THE HUNGARIAN OPEN AIR MUSEUM

The Hungarian Open Air Museum³ is the central open-air collection in Hungary. It is situated in the territory of the Danube-Ipoly National Park and it represents all folk architectural regions of the country, as well as the interior furnishings of the buildings in question. This was achieved thanks to the relocated or authentic replica/reconstructed buildings to the open-air museum setting, and the real objects collected in the settlements, during fieldwork. Originally, the exhibition periods, which are evoked in the interiors of the buildings, were set between the late 19th and the early 20th centuries, but in more recent times, the represented periods are closer to the present as they may display inter-war or post-World War II times, also. This change has been partly due to the age and memory range of the informants interviewed by the researchers.⁴ Apart from this shift in representation, and in addition to architectural know-how, attention has also been directed towards ‘way of life’, and thus, storytelling, together with microhistory, have gained even more

3 Concerning the original concept of the Museum, see Kecskés, Péter, ed.: *Szabadtéri Néprajzi Múzeum Szentendrén* ('Hungarian Open Air Museum in Szentendre') (Szentendre: Szabadtéri Néprajzi Múzeum, 1989).

4 See K. Csilléry, Klára: 'A szabadtéri múzeumok berendezési problémái' ('Problems of creating interiors in open air museums'), in Kecskés, Péter ed.: *Ház és Ember. A Szabadtéri Néprajzi Múzeum Közleményei 2.* ('House and Man. The Annual Yearbook of the Hungarian Open Air Museum 2.') (Szentendre: Szabadtéri Néprajzi Múzeum, 1984), 156; Nagyné Batári, Zsuzsanna: *An Exhibition is Born. Questions of Preparing Open Air Exhibitions Based on the Exhibition of the Northern Hungarian Village Regional Unit* (Szentendre: Szabadtéri Néprajzi Múzeum, 2014), 219.

significance in curatorial work. Ethnographers and historians research every story in connection with a building – its life, the family history of the owner, the stories of objects collected for the interior, and the community's most important stories. The microhistorical view helps us, at the Hungarian Open Air Museum, to show greater political and historical narratives from a personal aspect, which makes it easier for the visitor to understand significant events. Thus, besides the built and tangible heritage, the representation of intangible cultural heritage, and also the buildings' natural surroundings has become integral part of our work.

EXHIBITION METHODOLOGY

The museum consists of exhibition units representing the country's architectural macro and micro regions and territories outside the present-day Hungarian borders, where Hungarian populations live in diasporas due to emigration or the shift of borders during the country's history. So far, nine exhibition units have been realised, with homesteads (dwelling house, outbuildings, fences), communal buildings, sacred edifices, and, in addition, gardens and vineyards, the latter based on ethnobotanical research. The buildings are furnished with authentic objects characteristic of the exhibition period.

Different traditions and life moments can also be evoked in the houses, as an added content-layer, with the help of special objects (which may be ritualistic, simple or decorative in nature) and the rearrangement of the interiors. These situations can recall a moment of everyday life (e.g. washing up), or a holiday connected to the calendar year (e.g. Christmas Eve), or a moment from a person's main turning points in life (e.g. wedding). They may also represent a part of a working process (e.g. basket weaving) or a historic/traumatic event (e.g. population exchange and the resettlement of a family). Food is integral part of many of these life moments. All in all, the represented content is complex, and thus there are different kinds of interpretative tools which can assist the visitors in understanding what they see in the exhibitions.⁵

⁵ See Nagyné Batári, Zsuzsanna: 'Situations in the Hungarian Open Air Museum', in Schlimmgen-Ehmke, Katharina ed., *Vorsichte Objekte! Neue Ansätze im Umgang mit originalen Einrichtungen in Freilichtmuseen* ('Handle with Care! A new approach to handling originals in open air museums') (Detmold: LWL Freilichtmuseum Detmold, 2007), 25–34.

The applied methods of interpretation⁶ concerning the content in the museum buildings include indoor/thematic exhibitions, which are organised in the rooms of a museum building or in a gallery space, but there are also outdoor thematic exhibitions, consisting of both permanent and temporary displays, in the Hungarian Open Air Museum. We use living history⁷ with actors acting out different scenes, based on storytelling, thus exploiting the stories collected and documented during research. 'Hands-on' elements are important for visitors, as they provide tactile information, and engage people's attention. In some of the museum interiors, audio or video material, or multimedia installations, complement the exhibition content and messages. Panels and texts can be placed either on the outside or in the inside of a museum house. However, the most popular form of learning stems from the knowledge transfer by the museum front-of-house staff, who tell the story of the exhibition. During festivals, or when hosting education programmes, the museum provides authentic content, and the staff have the opportunity to supply those participating with more detailed information using interactive means. Publications of different genres also help to spread the data that the museum staff have compiled in connection with a topic. Realistic and detailed interiors help visitors to understand how an environment was used, and for this the museum uses reconstructions of paper objects (e. g. wallpapers) and also food installations.

FOOD HERITAGE

Food heritage is represented in many forms in the Hungarian Open Air Museum: in interiors, thematic indoor exhibitions, 'active venues', museum education programmes, thematic programme years (presented later), as well as in museum festivals, wellbeing and reintegration programmes, services and publications, and even in the gardens. For all of these representations, the background is provided by thorough research. The research process is complex and uses several sources – such as, for example, specialised bibliographies, newspapers, archival documents, photos, and videos – and documentation methods – photos, videos, interviews, or the collection of original food, for example cakes, bread, pretzels, etc.

6 See Nagyné Batári, Zsuzsanna: 'Interpretation', in *An Exhibition is Born*, 245–390.

7 See Faár, Tamara: 'Ott lehetsz, ahol akarsz! Élő történelem a múzeumban' ('You can be wherever you want! Living History in the Museum') (Szentendre: Szabadtéri Néprajzi Múzeum). <https://mokk.skanzen.hu/admin/data/file/20200423/ott_lehetsz_ahol_akarsz.pdf> accessed 15 September 2024.

Why do we put such strong emphasis on research and representation of food? It is our aim to safeguard food heritage, as part of the complex heritage representation of the museum; in other words, we seek to display food heritage in such a way that visitors can actually see or experience the food types in the exhibition. We also aim to be authentic and complex in representation, as food is an integral part of life, as well as to mediate information and knowledge of past times for present-day visitors. We also seek to enhance reconnection with the past and with identity, as food is one of the most important triggers in this context by reason of its appearance, smell and taste. Food heritage is also important for fostering knowledge which contributes to a more sustainable form of living and to a healthy lifestyle; and we also strive to launch dialogue about issues which are important in the present, as well as to provide enjoyment.

INTERPRETING FOOD HERITAGE

Interiors

Food is indispensable when representing a full interior display. The functions of some of the objects on display cannot be understood in the absence of the food related to them: the food which was stored in them or which was prepared or served in them – in the case of a bread-rack, for example. Food complements the abovementioned life moments as details contribute to a more life-like, less sterile, and more dynamic environment. Food can be displayed in several forms, e.g. as food-models, which are mainly made from a special type of plastic. For this, the museum worked together with a special installation designer⁸ (Fig. 1). At the beginning of the design process, the most important principles were laid down by the museum. First of all, object protection was a dominant factor: when planning to install plastic objects among the organic materials, we had to be aware of the risk of the evaporation of plastic ingredients, so the raw materials to be used were decided on. Then, as a next step, the designer asked to be supplied with the real food so that he could make the models for display. Thus, we had to provide the designer with the original food for the reconstruction. And that was a challenge in some cases. If the original food was still available, then an authentic copy could be prepared from it. If not, we had to have a reconstruction made on the basis of an existing photo or a

8 <www.maszkmester.hu> accessed 15 September 2024.

description of it. For example, in the case of a wedding cake from Novaj,⁹ there was only one woman in the village, at the time the research was being carried out, who could bake it – she knew the recipe and she also had the know-how, and last, but not least, she also had an oven in which she could bake the big wedding cake.

Thus, every time we plan to introduce any type of food into the interior of a museum building, we have to know the answer to the following questions: what did it look like? Is there a photo of it available? What is/was its size? Is it possible to get it made? Is there anyone who knows the necessary materials involved, the tools or utensils required, and who has the knowledge, practice, and skills to make it? What texture is characteristic of it? What colour is it? Do we know the recipe? We applied this method in the case of the Northern Hungarian village regional unit,¹⁰ and we had several loaves of bread, two cakes, sausages and many pretzels made and put on display.

However, sometimes only creativity is needed. For example, dried herbs can be put into the pantries, for, besides a visual effect, they also have a special kind of fragrance, which can help to make the interior more life-like. Real food is not acceptable because of the danger of attracting insects, or rodents, as they can cause harm to the objects on display. Traditionally linen bags were in widespread use for the storing of different kinds of products, such as lentils, beans or other dried products. Thus, in terms of visual representation, we only have to stuff these linen bags and tie the top. We can also put greaseproof paper onto ceramic jars, and tie them with strings, and, in this way, they can visually evoke different pots used for storing fat or jam. Another solution for a visual effect was achieved by using colour prints showing pickles, which were put into glass jars: in this case authenticity of appearance was also important.

Thus, food is an integral part of interiors displaying an everyday environment, but it is also important, when a tradition is recalled – in such cases, food is essential, as sometimes it is the only indicator of the special occasion we are displaying.

9 See Nagyné Batári, Zsuzsanna: 'A novaji nagykalács' ('The wedding cake in Novaj'), in Bali, János and Máté, György eds.: *Mézes-krémes. Néprajzi dolgozatok a falusi sütő- és főzőspecialistákról* ('Ethnographic essays on cooking-baking specialists in villages') (Budapest: ELTE BTK Néprajzi Intézet, 2009), 117–133.

10 Curator: Zsuzsanna Nagyné Batári, opened in 2010. See Nagyné Batári, Zsuzsanna: *Az Észak-magyarországi falu* ('The Northern Hungarian village regional unit') (Szentendre: Szabadtéri Néprajzi Múzeum, 2014).

Thematic exhibitions

We can shift the focus to food in the confines of thematic indoor exhibitions, also. A fusion of a thematic and an interior exhibition can also be found in the Skanzen, in the dwelling house from Novaj, since here the furnished pantry is an interactive location – visitors can touch the objects to get a feel of the interior. The story of the house is about the house-owner's family who are preparing for the wedding of a relative. This means that they bake huge milk-loaves as presents for the couple to be married.¹¹ We documented the process of baking this special type of cake. The tradition was still alive at the time of the research (2004–2005), so real cakes were baked and we could replicate them with the help of food models. However, the topic of baking was elevated to a higher level in the museum representation, and we prepared an exhibition in the pantry about baking with baking forms, arranged in groups, complemented with a description of these baking utensils and a recipe from the period.

Active venues

One of the most efficient ways to convey information is for museum visitors to come to the active venues. The main aim of these venues is to give visitors the possibility of a hands-on experience, to provide them with the option of trying out processes or to gather information from the activities of the museum staff operating in an entertaining way, in an authentic environment, and thereby engaging the visitors. The museum staff enliven activities relating to past time in a multi-sensory way with the help of demonstration objects.

There are different types of active venues. In the first type (ranging from the least to the most active) where an activity is presented, visitors are rather passive (e.g. in the watermill, they can touch types of flour or parts of the mill, but cannot operate it). In the second type, where demonstration objects are used in addition to museum objects, the visitors are allowed to touch and taste (e.g. herb representation or gingerbread baking). The third type is the most active one, where most of the objects are for demonstration purposes, and here the visitors are allowed to engage in the tasks even more actively (e.g. washing, weaving, pottery workshop, or candle-dipping).

11 See Nagyné Batári: *Az Észak-magyarországi falu*, 35–42.



Fig. 1. Part of a pantry, recalling 1963, with a food model of a loaf of bread and imitation pickles. Hungarian Open Air Museum. (Photo by Péter Deim)



Fig. 2. The active venue called 'Grandmother's Kitchen Secrets. Hungarian Open Air Museum. (Photo by Balázs Mohai)

Several of these active venues are connected to food and gastronomy. The one entitled 'Grandmother's Kitchen Secrets' in the Western Transdanubian regional unit's house from Baglad (Fig. 2), the museum staff work in the kitchen and thus visitors have the possibility of seeing how the place was used. There is a special pantry, where the processing of different kinds of fruit, vegetables or herbs is going on, and where pickles, jams, syrups and compotes are prepared, and where visitors can taste them as well. There is a house from Filkeháza in the Northern Hungarian village regional unit, which is furnished with objects of demonstration and where museum staff cook different types of meals. These meals are always related to the thematic year of the museum and authentic recipes of past times follow this thematic direction. In the 'Witch's Brew', our colleagues process plants, as in the Museum grounds there are more than 120 herbs, which we collect and dry, and also demonstrate their use. In this venue, visitors can also taste herb teas and they are allowed to handle the herbs and to taste them as well.

Museum education programmes

Food and gastronomy also permeate the museum's education programmes. These food aspects are offered for different age groups. In a food-related programme about baking bread, participants learn about the mill (for milling the grain), the tools of grain production, the utensils for bread baking, and finally they bake bread themselves (Fig. 3). The programme reflects on how to achieve a healthy diet, one step along the road to which is achieved by baking bread that does not contain any additives.¹² These programmes are also available for students living with disabilities.

Wellbeing programmes

Wellbeing programmes – reintegration programmes included – have food as an integral part of their structure. In the programme designed for people living with dementia, the reminiscence sessions always include food, as it is one of the most important triggers that can activate the participants' memories (Fig. 4). During these programmes, the environment helps with the recall of people's long-term memories

12 <<https://skanzen.hu/hu/Dokumentumok/dokumentumok-alrovat/Mindennapi%20kenyer%C3%BCnk>> accessed 7 September 2024.

as they engage in an activity which enhances their fine motoric skills – participants eat or drink some characteristic foods of the period they are transferred back to.¹³

In one of the reintegration programmes designed for homeless people, participants bake bread, an activity which helps them to feel comforted, and one which also develops skills related to everyday life and practice.

FESTIVALS AND THEMATIC PROGRAMMES

Food is an important part of festival programmes at the museum, and on these occasions active venues work in harmony with the festival topic. Visitors can learn about the already-prepared dishes and their history, e.g. during the Easter Festival, special emphasis is put on the food which is traditionally consecrated at the holiday, and a food-consecration event is held in the Roman Catholic Church from Óbudavár at the Hungarian Open Air Museum. Food is at the centre of our Festival of New Wine and Geese on St. Martin's Day (11 November), during which other related traditions are also represented.

'Thematic years' – such as the 'Thematic Year of the Mill' (Fig. 5) – focus on highlighted topics. Within the confines of these, everything is harmonised and organised around a central idea. Thus, interiors may be altered, publications are written, special thematic indoor exhibitions are prepared, living history dialogues are written, and active venues change in accordance with the topic in question. Thematic years help in the placing of emphasis on issues relevant to society, and, as a means of interpretation, help people to understand more about rural culture.

Services

The cultural heritage of folk cuisine appears in the services sections of the Hungarian Open Air Museum as well. In the menu of the Korzó Coffee House from Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureş, Romania) (Fig. 6), the cold buffet consists of cakes and cold dishes which are rooted in original recipes. The staff in the museum's restaurant prepared all the recipes which the curator had researched, and baked all the cakes in order to discover which could be adapted to today's visitor demands.

¹³ About the programmes, see <<https://magyarmuzeumok.hu/cikk/multidezo-interju-a-skanzen-dijnyertes-demencia-programjarol>> accessed 7 September 2024.



Fig. 3. A museum education programme about bread-baking. Hungarian Open Air Museum. (Photo by Gábor Tokodi)



Fig. 4. In the events organised for people living with dementia, eating and drinking are an integral part of the programme. Hungarian Open Air Museum. (Photo by Gábor Tokodi)

The same happened with the cold meats and salads, and a group of curators and managers decided upon which kinds of food to accept into the everyday menu of the coffee house.

In the museum, we also teach interested participants about the culinary practices of past times. In the Heritage Workshop series, programmes are offered in which the participants get an all-day long complex programme, including one dedicated to cooking and baking. In one workshop we show them how an oven should be used and they can also prepare related traditional food. There is also a programme focusing on wedding cakes. In connection with the 'Year of the Mills', a workshop was planned based on dishes prepared from different grains: soup, main course, and dessert, also. This knowledge does not only strengthen ties with the past and one's identity, but also offers knowledge about a more sustainable way of life as the dishes are prepared from seasonal produce, grown locally, and easy to cook/bake, and which are also healthy from a dietary point of view.

Publications

Needless to say, all the results of the research carried out by the museum staff (whether it is applied or basic research) are mediated to a wider audience with the help of publications. These are varied in genre, and, in addition to collections of essays, annual yearbooks, guides and conference volumes, we offer content in the language of popular science. One such type is the collection of recipes: we have a booklet about Jewish cuisine,¹⁴ a recipe collection for lamb dishes,¹⁵ a piece on railway restaurants,¹⁶ and a booklet on grains and recipes complemented with dietary tips.¹⁷ It is more and more important to be able to relate to the visitors of today, to offer knowledge which can lead to a sustainable livelihood, and which can be utilised in people's everyday life.

14 Szőke, Judit: *A kóser konyha. The kosher kitchen* (Szentendre: Szabadtéri Néprajzi Múzeum, 2010) (Bilingual).

15 Sári, Zsolt: *Bárány. Konyhai kalandok Európában / Lamb. Gastronomic adventures in Europe* (Szentendre: Szabadtéri Néprajzi Múzeum, 2014) (Bilingual).

16 Sári, Zsolt: *A rest / The Railway Restaurant* (Szentendre: Szabadtéri Néprajzi Múzeum, 2011). (Bilingual).

17 Nagyné Batári, Zsuzsanna: *Örlemények az egészségért / Ground grains for health* (Szentendre: Szabadtéri Néprajzi Múzeum, 2023) (Bilingual).



Fig. 5. The thematic year of the mill included the renovation of mills and the emphasising of ground grains in food heritage. Hungarian Open Air Museum. (Photo by Gábor Tokodi)



Fig. 6. The Korzó Coffee House in the Transylvanian building complex. Hungarian Open Air Museum. (Photo by Gábor Tokodi)

Gardens

While carrying out our research, we work together with a horticulturist, who accompanies the ethnographer on fieldwork, and examines the natural environment, the gardens, plants, trees and flowers, records their local names, use, and functions. Apart from that, if it is possible, seeds and seedlings are collected and plants are grown in the museum for the exhibition gardens. Garden plans are made on the basis of the research material provided by the museum staff, and thus the museum safeguards and represents the natural cultural heritage of the represented region also.

Fun Spot for Kids

There are different methods of interpretation in museum practice, based on visitor demands and the composition of an audience. We, at the Hungarian Open Air Museum, have always targeted, among others, the families arriving with children of different ages, as individual visitors. Based on edutainment, intergenerational and family learning, the importance of physical activities, the mediation of knowledge in an enjoyable way, and the provision of authentic content, there is a complex project with exhibitions, products, services, as well as locations designed for the young, called 'Children's Skanzen'.¹⁸ As a result, we have a specific playground, a small shop, two storybooks, and a locale for trying out costumes, among other activities, for children. In this project, we have elements that are related to the topic of food. The first is the 'Magic Barn', where enlarged objects recall the most significant elements of the laid table: the bread, sausage, knife, and the milk jug. In all installations, the related tools and utensils and work processes can be seen with the help of models and animations, and non-IT interactives. This approach helps younger children to understand how food-preparation processes worked.

18 See Nagyné Batári, Zsuzsanna and Horváth, Anita: 'Gyerek Skanzen – Gyerek Múzeum: Módszertani fejlesztések és elméleti kérdések a gyerekeknek szóló múzeumi élményelemekkel kapcsolatban' ('Methodological developments and theoretical issues in connection with museum experiences offered for children'), in Bereczki, Ibolya and Sári, Zsolt eds.: *Ház és Ember* 28–29 (Szentendre: Szabadtéri Néprajzi Múzeum, 2017), 61–74.

CONCLUSION

In the research, representation and interpretation work of the Hungarian Open Air Museum, food is a central topic: the environment, the tools and utensils and the processes of cooking and baking, are represented in the museum, and are connected to all buildings. We also exploit the recipes, build on the memories and associations related to food, and also mediate knowledge in connection with rural/folk/middle-class gastronomy. The most important principles are: authentic, exhibition-related content, with which we also aim to foster a sustainable lifestyle.

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FRUZZSINA ARKHELY

GASTRONOMY AS INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE: THE 'MILLER'S WAFER' TRADITION IN BORSODNÁDASD

ABSTRACT

In this article I discuss how the tradition of baking the 'Miller's Wafer' (*Molnárkalács*) was established in Borsodnádásd, a small town in Northern Hungary. The town's Metal Plate Works, a major industrial centre, significantly shaped the local community and its identity. After the factory's closure in 1990 local employment opportunities vanished, weakening the community's attachment to the town. The wafer-baking tradition, linked to the factory's history, was once widespread in Northern Hungary, but Borsodnádásd had the most surviving baking irons needed for wafer baking. By the early 2000s, only older generations practised the tradition. Local primary school teachers then proposed revitalising it as a means of fostering community spirit and to create value. This led to the establishment of the annual Festival of the Miller's Wafer, where community baking groups celebrate the tradition, and also to the creation of the House of the Miller's Wafer to produce the wafers. In 2012, Borsodnádásd's wafer-baking tradition was included in the National Inventory for Intangible Cultural Heritage, further boosting its development.

INTRODUCTION

The tradition of *Molnárkalács* from Borsodnádásd was included in Hungary's National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2012, as an element of the living heritage of the village.¹ This Inventory currently includes 56 heritage elements and 11 'best practices'. Out of the 56 heritage elements, five are related to gastronomy:

1 Reference to this study: Arkhely Fruzsina: Gastronomy as Intangible Cultural Heritage: the 'Miller's Wafer' Tradition in Borsodnádásd. In Anikó Báti and Patricia Lysaght (eds.): *Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage*. Budapest: ELTE RCH Institute of Ethnology – Museum of Ethnography, 2025. pp. 481–491.

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Kunság mutton stew from Karcag in Central Hungary, *Molnárkalács* from Borsodnádásd in the north, plum-jam making from the Szatmár-Bereg region in the northeast of the country, fish soup in Baja in the south, and the tradition of growing and processing Hadház flat cabbage in eastern Hungary. In addition, there are several heritage elements listed that are closely tied to gastronomy, such as the 'Boldog rose' associated with the living tradition of weddings in Boldog, in northern Hungary, or the '*slambuc*', which forms part of the traditional knowledge of the shepherds of Hortobágy in the eastern part of the country.²

It is important to emphasise that according to the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, the focus is not on the food itself, but on the community practices related to the act of dining.³

The tradition of baking *Molnárkalács* is an exceptionally complex heritage element as it encompasses aspects of tangible, intangible, industrial, and gastronomic heritage. In Borsodnádásd, due to the lifestyle changes that occurred during the 20th century, knowledge of the method of baking wafers became limited to the older generation. The role of *Molnárkalács* in the local diet gradually diminished, and was replaced by various pastries and cakes. The younger generation no longer saw the relevance of *Molnárkalács* in meals, and it came to be regarded as a treat for the poor.⁴ Around the 2000s, thanks to the heritage preservation work of two teachers at the local primary school, the residents began to rediscover their village's heritage, and a conscious tradition-keeping effort was initiated under the leadership of local historian, Tibor Sági.

Borsodnádásd is located in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County in northern Hungary, one of the most disadvantaged regions of the country. In 1990, after the change of regime, the Borsodnádásd Metal Plate Works, which had been a source of livelihood and the foundation of the local population's identity, closed down, leading to significant social challenges for the residents. They wanted to solve the problems of the town by building on local values. The aim was to build a new identity based on

2 See more details: Intangible Cultural Heritage in Hungary <<https://szellemikulturalisorokseg.hu/index.php>> accessed 15 January 2025.

3 Carr, Gilly – Stig Sørensen, Marie Louise and Rose, Dacia Viejo: 'Food as Heritage', in Lightfoot, Emma – Liu, Xinyi and Dorian Q. Fuller, Xinyi eds.: *Far from the Hearth. Essays in Honour of Martin K. Jones* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, 2018), 145–151.

4 Nemcsik, Pál ed.: *Molnárkalács-sütés Borsodnádásdon* ('Molnárkalács baking in Borsodnádásd') (Borsodnádásd, 1960) (Hermann Ottó Museum, Ethnographic Repository, Inventory number: 2421).

local traditions. Local economic and intellectual leaders saw the promotion of the tradition of baking *Molnárkalács* as a way of boosting the town's economy and of rebuilding its local identity.

This form of engaging with the past can be derived from presentist ideas characteristic of our time, which involve a present-centred perspective and a selective interpretation of the past.⁵ Thus, in the expanded present, the gap between the experiential space and the horizon of expectations has deepened, resulting in the formation of a new historical order characterised by a strong present-centredness. Through the key concepts of memory, commemoration and heritage, people try to find their past and their relationship with history, and through these, their place and identity in the rapidly-changing circumstances of the present.⁶ Based on François Hartog's work, we can conclude that heritage is to be understood in conjunction with memory, and that together they define identity. Thus, it is an identity that must be searched for, uncovered, preserved, and often rediscovered.⁷

With the critique of modernisation, the turn towards the past and the search by individuals and communities for a place in the world has intensified. As a result, the concept of cultural heritage has become one that helps people to define their sense of self. Heritage and memory are beginning to play a defining role in shaping identity. The identity of individuals and groups is a constantly evolving process, often shaped through conscious activity. In the identity crisis caused by globalisation and modernisation, local communities strive to assemble and, often using fictional elements, to justify their own sense of identity.⁸

The scent or taste of a particular dish can evoke memories that may also have a nostalgic effect. Tastes and smells often carry memories of home and childhood. Through the recall of memories, foods can contribute to the strengthening of identity and to a sense of social belonging.⁹ The preparation and consumption of

5 Lowenthal, David: 'Az örökség megteremtés' ('Creating a heritage'), in Erdősi, Péter and Sonkoly, Gábor eds.: *A kulturális örökség* ('The Cultural Heritage') (Atelier booklet 7) (Atelier, Budapest: L'Harmattan Press, 2014), 463–493.

6 Hartog, François: *A történetiség rendjei. Prezentizmus és időtapasztalat*. ('The orders of historicity. Presentism and the experience of time') (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2006), 120–121.

7 Hartog, François: *Örökség és történelem: az örökség ideje* ('Heritage and history: the time of heritage'), *Regio* 11/4 (2000), 4.

8 Siikala, Anna-Leena: 'Etnikus hagyományok és átalakuló társadalmak' ('Ethnic traditions and changing societies') Csonka-Takács, Eszter ed.: *EFI Communicationes* 6, (European Folklore Institute. Budapest, 1998), 7.

9 Carr, Stig Sørensen, Viejo Rose: 'Food as Heritage', 145.

food, in the context of heritage, is about more than just providing nourishment. Both can be viewed as human activities that carry social, cultural, and symbolic significance, and they can also define an individual's identity.¹⁰

THE SPREAD OF WAFER BAKING IN HUNGARY

Both the origin of *Molnárkalács* and its naming remain uncertain. There are various narratives about the origin of this confectionary and its name. The most widespread, and the one most accepted by the community, is that the miller's wife would offer miller's bread to the farmers waiting for their grain to be milled.¹¹ Sources suggest that the making of wafers was a known and widespread practice in Hungary from the 16th century onwards. Germany or Austria may have played a mediating role in its spreading in Hungary.¹² It was among the upper social classes that this type of confectionery was most popular. According to various recipe books and inventories, the technique of baking wafers was already known in the 16th and 17th centuries in Hungary, not only among the nobility but also among patricians and craftsmen, and it gradually made its way to the lower sections of society.¹³ Peasant culture is characterised by the fact that, as soon as material resources and the level of education allow, cultural patterns of a superior social class are rapidly followed.¹⁴ While the consumption of wafers quickly disappeared from the habits of the upper classes, it persisted for a long time among the rural population, since the poorest people had no problem in obtaining the basic ingredients (flour, salt and water) needed to make the wafers.¹⁵ In addition to the most basic ingredients, wealthier families usually added fat, butter, milk, sugar or perhaps even some flavouring to the dough.¹⁶

10 Carr, Stig Sørensen, Viejo Rose: 'Food as Heritage', 150.

11 Interview with Beáta Vass, a teacher at Borsodnádásd's Móra Ferenc Primary School, conducted on July 14–15, 2017, by Eszter Csonka-Takács ('Property of the Department of Intangible Cultural Heritage, Open Air Ethnographic Museum – Konkam Studio).

12 Chikány, Judit: "'Hoztunk mink ostyákat, tarkát, fehéréket'" ('Az ostyasütés gyakorlata és alkalmai a 16. századtól napjainkig') ('We brought you wafers, wafers with white wafers') ('The practice and occasions of wafer baking from the 16th century to the present day') *Studia Caroliensia* (2010), 219 (Journal of Károli Gáspár Reformed University).

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14 Verebélyi, Kincső: *Nép, Ipar, Művészet* ('People, Industry, Art') (Debrecen: Debreceni Egyetemi Kiadó, 2019), 121.

15 Nagybakay: *Címeres ostyasütővasak a Magyar Nemzeti Múzeumban a 15–16. századból*, 197.

16 Sági, Tibor: *Molnárkalács sütővasak Borsodnádásdon és környékén* ('Molnárkalács baking irons in and around Borsodnádásd') (Borsodnádásd: The Municipality of Borsodnádásd, 2008), 7.

Wafers, as a side dish, were mainly a garnish, a 'delicacy' for the wealthier sections of society.¹⁷

After its expansion in peasant households, *Molnárkalács* was not consumed as an everyday dish, but rather as a festive rarity, eaten on major holidays, such as Christmas, New Year and Easter. Wafer-baking irons were found in most households in areas where the iron needed to make them was available. Peasant women living near foundries and ironworks specialised in the production of *molnar* cakes as a cottage industry. Most sources mention the towns of Eger, Gyöngyös, Ózd and Mezőkövesd in northern Hungary, in this connection. But the tradition of baking wafers was not confined to the North Hungarian region as it was known from the villages along the Ipoly river, in the Mátra region, and even in Somogy county, in the west and south of Hungary. During the 19th century, wafers became an important type of pastry in the diet of rural farming communities generally.¹⁸

THE HERITAGE OF BORSODNÁDASD

As mentioned above, the tradition of baking the Miller's Wafer was known in many settlements of Hungary, yet it is listed as the heritage of Borsodnádásd. This can be explained, among other things, by the fact that, thanks to the operation of the Metal Plate Works of Borsodnádásd, a subsidiary of the Ózd Factory, sufficient raw material (platinum, scrap pig-iron), know-how and tooling capacity, for the production of the baking irons, was available. This gave Borsodnádásd an advantage in the subsequent process of reviving the tradition. In addition to the smithy, the workers at the Metal Plate Works also made their own baking irons in their own homes, as a kind of a side job. The makers and consumers of the wafers included almost all sections of society, from the wealthier peasant farmers, through smallholders, to the labourers who worked in the factory in addition to doing their own agricultural work.¹⁹ Lifestyle changes during the 20th century limited knowledge of the waffle-making process to the older generation.

17 Bódi, Erzsébet: 'Molnárkalács a felvidéki magyarok táplálkozási kultúrájában' ('Molnárkalács in the food culture of the Hungarians of Upper Hungary [Slovakia]'), in Halász, Péter ed.: *A Duna menti népek hagyományos műveltsége* ('The traditional culture of the Danube peoples') (Budapest: Közművelődési Információs Vállalat, 1991), 409.

18 Bódi, Erzsébet: 'A Kind of Cake ("molnárkalács") in the Hungarian Popular Culture', *Etnographica et folkloristica Carpathica* 4 (1985), 76–77.

19 Sági: *Molnárkalács sütővasak Borsodnádásdon és környékén*, 5.

After the political transition, a large proportion of people working in industry were affected by unemployment and the situation in Borsodnádásdon was no different. In 1990, the Metal Plate Works factory, which was considered to be outdated, closed down, and the factory workers had to find new goals and sources of livelihood almost overnight. The closure of the factory meant the loss of a job that provided a daily living for the employees. As a consequence, their identity as workers linked to the factory was shaken, but so was their identity as local residents. The metal plate factory was not only a workplace for the workers, but it also defined virtually every aspect of their lives. The norms that prevailed inside the factory, were also valid outside the factory walls, and the workers formed a factory community outside of the factory gates.²⁰

In this situation, it was of key importance for the settlement and its inhabitants that new identities and new practices be developed in order to ensure the survival of a settlement that was losing its function, and of a community that was losing its frame of daily life. It was then that the need to construct a new identity emerged. In order to fill the gap left by the closure of the factory and the decline of the village, the inhabitants turned to reviving the tradition of baking the Miller's Wafer.

We want to turn this into a complex issue, a brand, to make it part of the future of Borsodnádásd, in every sense, in dress, even in attitude. Apart from the fact that this has financial implications, the income for the municipality is a very important ideology, a cohesive force, a new identity for the municipality, which was the Metal Plate Works founded in 1864, but unfortunately it collapsed in ruins in the early 90s, and we are now trying to revive it, to transform the love of iron from the Metal Plate Works into the love of baking iron²¹ (Krisztián Kormos, Mayor of Borsodnádásd; English translation by the author).

Around the 2000s, the inhabitants began to rediscover the heritage of their village and began a conscious effort to create a tradition under the leadership of a local historian named Tibor Sági. Their work aimed at boosting the town's economy, at creating jobs, and at rebuilding local identity. They worked on the basis that the rediscovery of local tradition could help to stop the impoverishment and depopulation of the settlement. According to Mihály Hoppál, respect for local traditions creates a sense of local identity, which aims to give individuals a sense of belonging to their immediate environment, so that they may well see themselves as

20 Murányi, István: 'A munkások lokális identitásának jellemzői Borsodnádásdon' ('The characteristics of the local identity of workers in Borsodnádásdon'), *Korall* 49 (2012), 106–107.

21 Interview with Krisztián Kormos, Mayor of Borsodnádásd, 14–15 July 2017, by Csonka-Takács, Eszter (Directorate of Intangible Cultural Heritage – Konkam Studio).

proud members of the community. A strong community can also contribute to the development of a settlement, as local traditions are usually associated with a strong sense of identity. Therefore, one of the aims of building a strong local sense of heritage is to strengthen the community, which in turn contributes to the development of the municipality.²²

The *Molnárkalács* Festival, established in 2008, can be seen as a milestone in the tradition-making of *Molnárkalács*-baking. In the nomination form it is stated that the city's leadership, 'recognising the community-building and identity-forming role inherent in the tradition of baking *Molnárkalács*, has organised the festival every year since 2008'.²³ However, the example of Borsodnádásd is not unique in the creation of this kind of heritage. In many cases, the leaders of local communities try to turn a tradition, a building, or a local cuisine, into a cultural heritage form, a kind of product, in order to boost local cultural tourism and profit.²⁴ Tourism could be one of the possible ways of socially exploiting heritage.²⁵ In many cases, the aim of this type of festival is to develop the area in question and its settlements. In the short term, they can become promotional, money-generating events, with a conscious intention to do so. The slogan used in this context is 'localism', highlighting the importance of local traditions.²⁶

The Miller's Wafer Festival provides an opportunity for community participation, involving members of the community in the tradition. In the process of constructing the tradition, the aim has been to create a united community of tradition keepers. Anyone in the village can form a group. Under a tent, baking groups bake wafers all day long for visitors to the festival, who can taste the wafers made according to different recipes and flavours, for free. As well as the baking demonstrations, the stage will host performances by local and regional folk art and traditional groups, throughout the day, and every year star guests are invited to entertain festival-goers.

22 Hoppál, Mihály: 'Hagyomány és identitás' ('Tradition and identity'), in Csonka-Takács, Eszter ed.: *Tanulmányok a Szellemi Kulturális Örökség Megőrzéséről*, ('Studies on the Preservation of Intellectual Cultural Heritage') (Budapest: European Folklore Institute, 2008), 13.

23 Nomination Data Sheet, which is part of the heritage element documentation: SZKÖ/11-2012.

24 Hoppál, Mihály: 'A szellemi kulturális örökség megőrzése' ('Preserving intangible cultural heritage'), in Hoppál, Mihály ed.: *Folklór és emlékezet*. ('Folklore and memory') (Budapest: European Folklore Institute, 2011), 117.

25 Husz, Mária: 'A kulturális örökségpolitika paradoxonjairól' ('On the paradoxes of cultural heritage policy') *Tudásmenedzsment* 15/1 (2014) 47–48.

26 Pusztai, Bertalan: *Megalkotott hagyományok és falusi turizmus. A pusztamérgesi eset* ('Established traditions and rural tourism. The case of Pusztamérges') (Szeged: University of Szeged, Department of Ethnography, 2003), 20.

Based on the success of the Miller's Wafer Festivals and the increasing number of visitors every year, the Municipality, and the Association for the Future of Borsodnádásd, opened the Miller's Wafer House in 2015. The baking machine for the production of the wafers was made in the Ziegler manufactory in Zsámbék, a town in Pest County.²⁷ The machine has a total of twenty-four moulds with different patterns on them. These include mushrooms, a deer, a couple, a small railway, and other designs typical of the village. The designs were developed by the locals, but the engraving was done in the manufactory in Zsámbék. These different designs feature alternatively on one side of the iron and the logo of the Miller's Wafer product on the other. There are two types of packaging used for the wafers – one is the less expensive foil version and the other, which is more expensive, is a paper box. The wafers produced by the Miller's Wafer House are mostly sold in two flavours – vanilla and cinnamon – but the producers also try to surprise customers with special flavours for a particular holiday – for example, at Christmas they have produced gingerbread flavoured wafers, and they also have treated all of the residents of the village with gingerbread-flavoured wafers wrapped in a gift box.²⁸ The sale of *Molnárkalács* in this form helps to introduce the folk tradition to a wider audience, while also creating jobs in the village and generating revenue for the city.

The recognition of the economic, particularly the tourism-related, potential of heritage is not a new concept. The economic sector, referred to as the heritage industry by Gregory Ashworth and John Tunbridge, has emerged in an increasing number of small Hungarian settlements, and, in many cases, it has become a key element in local development. Social and economic organisations managing heritage, as well as the leadership of individual settlements, are aware of its impact on the local economy. Therefore, part of the investments made locally are specifically focused on heritage-related projects, which are the result of deliberate strategies. Tourism built around heritage offers local economic development opportunities, creating marketable products or job opportunities as part of this process.²⁹

27 Katona, Franciska Dorina: 'A molnárkalács borsodnádásdi hagyományának szerepe a turizmus fejlődésében' ('The role of the Molnárkalács tradition in the development of tourism in Borsodnádásd'), in Tánczos, Tamás and Csugány, Julianna eds.: *Kari Tudományos Diákköri Konferencia, Tanulmánykötet* (Eger: Eszterházy Károly Főiskola Liceum Kiadó, 2016), 24.

28 Interview with Sági, Tibor Head of the Local History Collection, 14–15 July 2017, by Csonka-Takács, Eszter (Property of the Directorate of Intangible Cultural Heritage – Konkam Studio).

29 Graham, Brian – Ashworth, G.J. and Tunbridge, J.E.: 'Az örökség a gazdaságfejlesztési stratégiában' ('Heritage in the economic development strategy'), in Erdősi, Péter and Sonkoly, Gábor eds.: *A kulturális örökség* ('Cultural heritage') (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2004), 394.

SUMMARY

As I have discussed in this article, the tradition of baking *Molnárkalács* was known in several Hungarian settlements, yet it appears on the National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage as part of Borsodnádásd's heritage. Currently, there are just a few settlements in Hungary where the tradition of wafer baking has survived as a living tradition. Generally, we can say that the tradition of wafer baking spread in areas (primarily industrial centres) where it was easy to acquire waffle irons. Over the centuries, various local, distinctive versions of the tradition and the methods of making the waffle irons, developed.

In Borsodnádásd, apart from the presence of the Metal Plate Factory, the conscious tradition-building work that took place in the settlement is undoubtedly significant. Thanks to the heritage-preserving processes, the custom of wafer baking has become a defining spiritual heritage of local identity.

Thanks to conscious tradition-building efforts, the baking of the Miller's Wafer has become a beloved tradition in Borsodnádásd village. The Miller's Wafer Festival was created, leading to the formation of more baking groups. Over time, more individuals and families have acquired unique baking irons, proving that this tradition is integral to local identity. These irons are not just practical wafer-baking tools but they also have evolved into symbols of value and respect for tradition. No longer stored away, they have become prestige objects. The growing appreciation of the tradition, bolstered by media coverage, has improved the self-esteem of the people of Borsodnádásd. The creation of the Miller's Wafers House has also helped to boost the town's economy.

It is important to ensure that, alongside the community-building and identity-strengthening roles of the newly-widespread heritage element, economic interests do not take undue precedence or overshadow the preservation of tradition. In the case of food-related heritage elements, there is often a risk that, driven by economic interests, the tradition could become commercialised or take on a festival-like nature. It is crucial that the focus remains on community practice, rather than being primarily directed towards area and urban development. This is because increasing attention, and associated economic and tourism potential, can sometimes undermine the interests of the community and tradition preservation.

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ERIKA VASS

THE FOOD HERITAGE OF THE TRANSYLVANIAN ARMENIANS

ABSTRACT

In my paper I present two dishes of the Transylvanian Armenians, *churut* and *angadjabur*. These, in addition to religion, have remained symbols of Transylvanian Armenian identity to this day although their language has been assimilated to Hungarian since the 19th century.

ARMENIANS IN TRANSYLVANIA

First of all, I shall briefly summarise the history of Transylvania and the settling of the Armenians there.¹ Transylvania has been characterised by ethnic diversity: Hungarians, Szeklers, Romanians, Germans, Armenians, Jews and Gypsies have, for centuries, lived together there and influenced each other's cultures. For centuries, it belonged to Hungary, then to the Habsburg Empire, then to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. In the 17th century, when Armenians settled here, the state was the Principality of Transylvania, ruled by Hungarian princes.

Armenians arrived in Transylvania from Moldavia in the last third of the 17th century. Armenian middlemen minorities were mainly cattle traders and leather-working craftsmen who filled an economic gap between the Hungarian nobility (political elite) and peasants. The Transylvanian princes supported their stay with privileges to promote the economic development of Transylvania.²

1 Reference to this study: Vass Erika: The Food Heritage of the Transylvanian Armenians. In Anikó Bádi and Patricia Lysaght (eds.): *Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage*. Budapest: ELTE RCH Institute of Ethnology – Museum of Ethnography, 2025. pp. 493–503.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61380/978-963-567-084-0-32>

2 Pál, Judit: 'Armenian Image – Armenian Identity – Assimilation of the Transylvanian Armenians in the 18th and 19th Centuries', in Barszczewska, Agnieszka and Peti, Lehel eds.: *Integrating Minorities*:

A larger number of Armenians lived in four settlements (Gheorgheni, Frumoasa, Dumbrăveni and Gherla) in Transylvania, where they built their own churches. The altarpiece to their national saint, St. Gregory the Illuminator, can also be found in the Catholic churches of other settlements (Nușeni, Dej, Făgăraș, Sighetu Marmăției, Sibiu, and Odorheiu Secuiesc).³ The altarpieces show the migration route of Armenian traders. According to a source from 1830, smaller numbers of Armenians also lived in other towns (Brasov, Deva, Târgu Mureș, Târgu Secuiesc, Sibiu, Oradea, Sebeș, and Timișoara).⁴

Armenians were quickly integrated into Transylvanian Hungarian society. The price of integration was religious union: the Armenians converted to Roman Catholicism, but kept their ancient rites, and Armenian remained the liturgical language. Thus, the church played an important role in keeping the community together and preserving Armenian identity. During the 18th and 19th centuries, the Armenians also assimilated linguistically and became Hungarian speakers. Some of the descendants of the Transylvanian Armenians have preserved their sense of ancestry to this day.

Transylvania has been part of Romania since 1920. In the 20th century, the Armenians, who defined themselves as part of the Hungarian nation, shared the hardships of the Hungarians who had become a minority in Romania. The Tarisznyás Márton Museum in Gheorgheni is located in one of the most significant buildings of Armenian architectural heritage – an Armenian trading house built in the late 18th century. The new exhibition, opened in 2023 ('With head held high. Trianon Men from Gheorghe') presents the history of the 20th century through the life of the Armenian Vákár family. The head of the family had to leave his homeland after the

Traditional Communities and Modernization (Cluj-Napoca: The Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities – Kriterion Publisher, 2011), 13–32.

3 Pál, Emese: 'Világosító Szent Gergely ábrázolásai Erdélyben' ('Representations of Saint Gregory the Illuminator in Transylvania'), in Kovács, Zsolt – Sarkadi Nagy, Emese and Weisz, Attila eds.: *Liber discipulorum. Tanulmányok Kovács András 65. születésnapjára* ('Liber Discipulorum. Studies for the 65th Birthday of András Kovács') (Cluj-Napoca: Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület – Entz Géza Művelődéstörténeti Alapítvány, 2011), 239–254.

4 Kovács, Bálint: 'Örmények Erdélyben. A 17. századi letelepedéstől a 20. századig' ('Armenians in Transylvania. From 17th century settlement to the 20th century'), in Bernád, Rita and Kovács, Bálint eds.: *A Szamosújvári Örmény Katolikus Gyűjtőlevéltár* ('The Armenian Catholic Collective Archives of Gherla') (Budapest–Gyulafehérvár–Leipzig: Gyulafehérvári Római Katolikus Érsekség – ELTE Egyetemi Levéltár – Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2011), 21.

Romanian takeover in January 1919. He settled in Budapest, and his family followed him there in 1923.⁵

The assimilation of Armenians into Hungarian society is illustrated by the decrease in the number of foods defined as Armenian. Eszter Kisbán summarised the characteristics of Armenian cuisine based on sources from the 19th and early 20th centuries. She showed that at the end of the 19th century, about 40 dishes were still described as being part of the Armenian canon, but by the 1970s only eight were included.⁶ Of these, *churut* and *angadjabur* have survived to the present day.

ARMENIANS IN GHEORGHENI

In 2015, as a staff member of the Hungarian Open Air Museum I carried out fieldwork in Gheorgheni city (Hungarian: Gyergyószentmiklós) with my photographer colleague, Péter Deim. As part of this, we made a video with three *churut*-making women. Then two women showed us how to cook three types of soup with *churut*. In 2024, as a staff member of the Museum of Ethnography, Budapest, I had the opportunity to return to Gheorgheni, where I participated in the celebration of the saint's day of the Armenian Church and attended the 14th Armenian Art Festival.

Gheorgheni is located in the eastern part of Transylvania, in the Szeklerland. Szeklerland is a historical and ethnographic area, where Szekler people have lived since the 13th century. The main task of the Szeklers was soldiering and border defence, and they were also mainly engaged in agriculture. The Szeklers are a Hungarian-speaking ethnic group, who identify themselves as Hungarian in censuses.

Gheorgheni lies next to the road connecting Moldavia with Transylvania. The settlement was granted the right to hold a national fair in 1607. This made it an important place for Armenian traders still living in Moldavia. For this reason, the first Armenian family settled in Gheorgheni in 1637.⁷ Gheorgheni became a

5 Gál, Levente and Kaján, Imre eds.: *Fölemelt fővel. Trianoni férfiak Gyergyóból*. ('With Head Held High. Trianon Men from Gheorghe') (Gyergyószentmiklós: Tarisznay Márton Múzeum, 2024).

6 Kisbán, Eszter: 'Örmények: ételek, jelképek Erdélyben és Magyarországon' ('Armenians: Food, Symbols in Transylvania and Hungary'), *Ethnographia* 103 (1992), 1–27.

7 B. Garda, Dezső: 'A gyergyószentmiklósi örmény kereskedők' ('The Armenian traders of Gheorgheni'), in Boér, Hunor et al. eds.: *Acta Siculica 2009* (Sepsiszentgyörgy: Székely Nemzeti Múzeum, 2009), 391–434.

handicraft centre thanks to the Armenian craftsmen who settled there. For a long time, Armenians also had the right of self-government in the city, separate from the Szeklers.⁸

In 1850, 1,144 Armenians were registered in the town of 5,362 inhabitants.⁹ In 20th century censuses, the majority of Armenians identified themselves as Hungarian. Because of their small number, some may have been in the ‘other’ category, but we do not have precise information on this. Their small number shows the progress of assimilation, and their Armenian identity can only be traced in their religious and food habits.

In 2021, out of the 15,884 inhabitants of Gheorgheni, 12,187 were Hungarian, 1,226 Romanian, and 80 were Roma native speakers.¹⁰

Churut

Churut is a food seasoning made from milk and parsley. *Churut* and *Angadjabur* soup are well known food items among Transylvanian Armenians everywhere, and, because of their common origin, they are also used by Armenians in Moldavia.

There are two reasons for preserving *churut*: it keeps for a long time after drying, and it can be used to prepare a quick, everyday soup. The leftover soup made on festive occasions was not thrown away, but was reused the next day, flavoured with *churut*.

Good quality cow’s milk is important for the *churut*. The women who make *churut* buy the necessary milk from farmers they know. I interviewed three women who make *churut*. One of the women boils 25 litres of milk and then puts it into bottles where it ferments over a period of 5 to 6 weeks. During this time, the milk is stirred twice daily so that it does not become bitter. The whey produced in the process is then removed, as the aim is to end up with a dense stock. In recent years some people are speeding up the process by using kefir mushrooms in the milk, obtained from dairy factories. When the milk has fermented, it is cooked with 1.3 kg of parsley

8 Pál, Judit: *Városfejlődés a Székelyföldön 1750–1914* (‘Urban development in Szeklerland 1750–1914’) (Csíkszereda: Pro-Print Könyvkiadó, 2003), 107, 161.

9 Pál: *Városfejlődés a Székelyföldön 1750–1914*, 637.

10 <<https://www.recensamantromania.ro/rezultate-rpl-2021/rezultate-definitive/>> accessed 8 August 2024.

leaves, which have been minced in a meat grinder, for 8 to 10 hours, on a low heat so that the water will evaporate. Before the spread of the deep freezers, the parsley that was used was that which had been dried for winter use, but more recently it is stored in the freezer prior to use.

It is important to note that the woman who makes the *churut* uses a copper pot for cooking, which, in Hungary, was specially made for this purpose. After cooking, the woman hangs the resulting thick mass in a tea towel to drain off the water. After two days, she uses an ice-cream scoop to form the mass into uniform dumpling-like shapes. She wraps them in a tablecloth overnight so that the textile can absorb the remaining water.

The next day, she forms the 'dumpling' into cone-shaped pieces by hand. She puts the cones in an airy place and lets them dry for two weeks. One litre of milk makes 5 to 6 pieces of *churut*. One piece of *churut* is sufficient for the making of about 2 litres of soup.

Before the refrigerator came into use, the cones were dried out for 5 to 6 weeks, so that they would last for a long time. Because of their hard texture, they were grated into the soup when cooking. Nowadays, many people store fresh pieces of *churut* in the freezer, so that they will stay soft and are easier to use when cooking. Some people put the thick *churut* mass in jars, pour oil on top to prevent it from spoiling, and store the jars in the refrigerator. This method saves time because the maker does not have to form the mass into cones.

All of the three women whom I interviewed are of Szekler origin. Two learned how to make *churut* from their grandmothers and mothers, while the third woman learned it from her mother-in-law, who served in an Armenian family. All three now supplement their pensions with the income they gain from making *churut*. The women's husbands and daughters also do their part in the work – they help with the lifting of the heavy pots and in the selling of the finished product.

In the past, families used to prepare *churut* for themselves at home, but now they no longer do so. This is due to the complexity of the process and the strong smell of the product. One of my interviewees told me that she had tried to make *churut* in her block of flats, but the strong smell spread to the neighbours. So, she now buys the *churut* ready-made.

Buyers either visit the women who make the *churut* in their homes, or they can buy *churut* at the market. Each producer has an established customer-base. Some of the customers were born in Gheorgheni and live abroad. In their new home, they are connecting with their roots by eating *churut* bought in the market.

Churut is known in the surrounding villages only to those who have had or still have contact with Armenians. During the 19th century, Armenians moved to several settlements around Gheorgheni, and opened up shops locally. Some of the rural Szekler girls also served as maids for Armenian families in the town. One of my Szekler interviewees still keeps a photograph of her mother, born in 1922 in Remetea, who had worked in the kitchen of a wealthy Armenian family in the 1930s. There she learned how to make *churut*. Later, she also made *churut* for her family.

Among the Szeklers, there are those who got to know *churut* through marriage with Armenians, and then some of their relatives also took a liking to it. So, it is not only the Armenians who eat it, as some of the Szeklers also like it, and cook it on a regular basis every week or two. I have Szekler friends from Gheorgheni who regularly bring this speciality as a gift to their friends when they travel.

Angadjabur soup with *churut*

In 2015, during my fieldwork visit to Gheorgheni city, two Szekler women made three types of soup with *churut*. One of the women learned about these dishes from her Armenian husband's family.

Angadjabur soup with *churut* is preserved as a festive dish. It is prepared on 24 December, which was once a fasting day. So it was cooked on the 25th, Christmas Day. In addition to Christmas Day, it was also eaten on Easter Sunday.

Angadjabur is a small dumpling filled with meat. Its name comes from the Armenian word for 'earlobe', as the shape of the dumpling resembles this. Approximately 1,000–1,300 pieces are made from 1 kg of flour, 10 eggs, and 25 dkg of beef. Nowadays, it is called *angadjabur laska*; the word *laska* means 'pasta' for Szekler people, so the term also points to the coexistence of Armenians and Szeklers.

In order to make *angadjabur*, the two women scraped the beef with a knife – since there was no meat grinder originally – which resulted in a mushy texture. They cut the thinly-rolled dough into 2x2 cm pieces, then put beef seasoned with pepper into

each piece. The meat was not salted so that the noodle would not soften from the salt. Then, the dough was shaped into an earlobe shape with a special hand movement. In the past, the dumpling was dried, so it could last for a long time. Nowadays, the leftovers are stored frozen in the freezer.

The soup is made with a base stock of beef and marrowy bones. Carrots, parsley, a little celery, a slice of kohlrabi, and *churut*, are added to the soup stock. One of the ladies pointed out that they never put sour cream in their *angadjabur* soup, but that nowadays everyone makes it with sour cream.

Since the preparation of *angadjabur* is labour- and time-intensive, fewer and fewer people are taking on the task of making it nowadays. At the Armenian festival, a woman from Gherla told me that she makes *angadjabur* for others to sell, but I have not heard of such a person in Gheorgheni. Instead of homemade *angadjabur*, many people nowadays prepare *angadjabur* soup with store-bought tortellini.

In Gheorgheni today, *angadjabur* soup with *churut* can be found only in one restaurant – owned by an Armenian. The soup has undergone two innovations: firstly, instead of using homemade dumplings they use tortellini, which is a semi-prepared product available in larger supermarkets. Secondly, the soup contains a variety of vegetables, including mushrooms, which are also easily available. Gyros, hamburger, french fries offered by the restaurant are much more popular among young people than *angadjabur* soup.

The preparation of *churut* and *angadjabur* was also featured in a popular Hungarian television gastronomy programme ('Gasztróangyal'). It can also be found in many recipe books from Transylvania or Szeklerland and it can be read about on the internet. In 2008, the Transylvanian Armenian Roots Cultural Association in Hungary published a recipe book which included details of the preparation of *churut* and *angadjabur*.¹¹ The book can also be found in some of the families of Armenian origin in Gheorgheni. This is a tangible expression of Armenian identity, but it is not used in everyday life.

11 Issekutz, Sarolta ed.: *Erdélyi örmény konyha, fűszerezve* ('Transylvanian Armenian cuisine, seasoned') (Budapest: Erdélyi Örmény Gyökerek Kulturális Egyesület, 2008).

THE ARMENIAN CULTURAL FESTIVAL

After the fall of Nicolae Ceaușescu's dictatorship in Romania in 1989, free expression of ethnic identity in Szeklerland was also made possible – through events or festivals linked to religious and historical celebrations. At this time, both in Hungary and in Transylvania, new attempts to revive the 'lost Armenian identity' were made.

With this aim in mind, the Armenian Catholic Association of Gheorgheni was founded in 2009. Among their important programmes is the Armenian Cultural Festival which has been organised since 2011. The Association and the Armenian Festival have created an institutional framework for the preservation of Armenian traditions.

The festival, organised around the saint's day of the Armenian Church (birthday of the Virgin Mary's), brings together the religious and gastronomic heritage of the Armenians. In addition, cultural events (book reviews, lectures on the history of Transylvanian Armenians) have been included in the programme to strengthen the Armenian roots of the participants.

At the festival, food becomes a symbol of a shared past that can be interpreted by all members of the community, and from the beginning, the programme included the presentation of *churut* and *angadjabur* as typical Armenian dishes.

The festival participants could get acquainted with the making of *churut*. Two Szekler sisters demonstrated the making of *angadjabur*, which visitors could taste. One of the women's husbands is Armenian and this was the thread that connected them to the festival in 2016. They are also members of the Armenian church choir. The two women use a dough-straightening machine and a meat grinder so that the making of the *angadjabur* soup has become easier; in addition, this method is much faster than the traditional way of making it.

The festival brings together Armenian communities living in different settlements and helps to foster friendships. It also plays an important role in introducing Armenian food to younger generations, even if there is no opportunity to pass on the food heritage in families.

In 2024, teams (representing Gheorgheni, Toplița, Gherla, Miercurea Ciuc and Frumoasa) cooked *angadjabur* soup with *churut*. The soups prepared were similar in taste, but there were differences in the proportion of ingredients used by the

different teams. Furthermore, the team from Toplița used store-bought tortellini instead of home-made *angadjabur*. The members of the local team from Gheorgheni also cooked goulash alongside Armenian food, thus expressing their dual identity.

The different teams had their own uniforms, which were an expression of their belonging to the communities in question. The team from Gheorgheni also wore aprons. The material for these was brought from Armenia last year (2023) by the Association's President. The material has a pomegranate pattern, which the locals consider to be an Armenian characteristic. This apron also represents a link between Armenia of the present and Armenians settled in the past.

One of the aims of the festival is to connect with the Armenians of today. As part of this, a group of Armenians from Karabakh and a Szekler folk dance group from Remetea (a village next to Gheorgheni) performed a dance show. Among the Armenian gastronomic specialities of the day, cognac and coffee were also on offer. Although it should be noted that the Armenian name for coffee referred only to the technology used in its preparation: finely ground coffee was brewed in copper pots with water. We know this as 'Turkish coffee'. In addition to Armenian food, chimney cakes (*kürtőskalács*) related to Szekler gastronomy were also available for purchase at the festival.

MUSEUM REPRESENTATION OF TRANSYLVANIAN ARMENIAN FOOD IN THE HUNGARIAN OPEN AIR MUSEUM

The Transylvanian building complex¹² was opened in the Hungarian Open Air Museum, Szentendre, in 2022. The visitors can see Transylvania's rural and urban past. The ground floor of the house from Târgu Secuiesc (Hungarian: Kézdivásárhely) is a fashion retail shop owned by the Armenian merchant, Antal Dávid. The interior reflects the early 20th century. Antal Dávid's flat can be found upstairs. In the dining room, *angadjabur* soup can be seen in the form of an artificial dish on the festive table. The other part of the exhibition presents the history of the Transylvanian Armenians. Visitors can explore the two pillars of Armenian identity: religion and

12 See the paper by Nagyné Batári, Zsuzsanna about food representation in open air museums in this volume.

food heritage, the latter including *churut* and *angadjabur*. The curator of the exhibition was Tamás Szegedy-Kloska.¹³

SUMMARY

Although the language and much of the traditional culture of Armenians disappeared during the assimilation processes of the 18th and 19th centuries, the two dishes – *churut* and *angadjabur* – have remained as symbols of Armenian identity to this day. They were also adopted by the Szeklers, who are related to the Armenians, and thus became a symbol of the Gheorgheni region within Szeklerland.

At home, within the family, the making of *churut* had been discontinued by the end of the 20th century, as it was time-consuming and had a strong smell, but some women took up the making and selling of *churut* as an income supplement. On festive occasions, the elderly still make *angadjabur*, but in the long term, I think that tortellini from the shop in the making of *angadjabur* soup, represents the future.

The festival plays an important role in articulating and making visible Armenian identity. It also helps to promote these dishes – *churut* and *angadjabur* – among those who have forgotten or who never knew them.

The festival is held on the day before the saint's day of the Armenian Church (birthday of the Virgin Mary), that the sacred and profane pillars of Armenian identity are interconnected. Both play an important role in community building.

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ZOLTÁN OTTÓ FÜLÖP

AN EXHIBITION TO QUENCH CULTURAL THIRST

THE SODA WATER COLLECTION AT THE SZEGED WATER TOWER FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE HERITAGISATION OF GASTRONOMIC GOODS

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to focus on the issues of how the heritage concept could be included in the process of cultural representation of the Szeged Hydroglobe. I inquire into the ways in which the soda water artifacts become integrated into the continental collection circuit. I demonstrate a new trend of heritage-making, a shift from traditional representational paradigms, and a different interpretation of objects of carbonated water.

INTRODUCTION

My aim is to capture the heritage-making process of Hungarian gastronomic products through the musealisation of soda water from the perspective of cultural transfer.¹ It is my contention that using heritage-making as an analytical approach opens up a new field for the study of the functions and symbolic meanings of soda water. I have chosen a traditional food product that is under national protection, as well as a part of everyday and prestige consumption, placed in museum collections, with special cultural practices attached to it. Political and social actors include it in the category of national symbolism and position it in a number of ways: as

1 Reference to this study: Zoltán Ottó Fülöp: An Exhibition to Quench Cultural Thirst: The Soda Water Collection at the Szeged Water Tower from the Perspective of the Heritagization of Gastronomic Goods . In Anikó Bádi and Patricia Lysaght (eds.): *Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage*. Budapest: ELTE RCH Institute of Ethnology – Museum of Ethnography, 2025. pp. 505–519.

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gastronomic and industrial heritage, and as a 'Hungaricum' – a uniquely Hungarian product. It is useful to start from the food industry definition of the product. According to the *Codex Alimentarius Hungaricus*, soda water is carbonated drinking water that is produced using closed system technology under high pressure, with the same carbon dioxide content throughout the bottle from the first drop to the last. Since the late 20th century, Hungary, in line with international trends, has placed greater emphasis than formerly, on protecting its heritage, which is considered outstanding. In this regard, food products are playing an increasingly important role.² Given that the production of soda water cannot be localised to any specific geographical location, that is, given that it can be produced anywhere regardless of geographical coordinates, with the right expertise and technology, as I see it, the product – like TSG ('Traditional Speciality Guaranteed') products protected by the European Union – is characterised by a kind of duplicity: it bears the hallmarks of both *freedom* and *homelessness*, as Swedish ethnologist Karin Salomonsson³ has said.

THE EXPRESSION OF IDENTITY AT THE GASTRONOMIC LEVEL

In a study by Slovak ethnographer Rastislava Stoličná,⁴ who interprets food culture as a marker of *ethno-identification* that can be used to characterise a people or a nation, the term gastrationalism, used by American sociologist Michaela DeSoucey,⁵ among others, can be adapted to this identity articulation process. She thinks that valorising the gastronomy of a nation can saturate its food with symbolic content, from which it can derive imagological benefits, in the hope that the valorisation of these products and the affixing of administrative and legal labels will

2 Magyar Élelmiszerkönyv/Codex Alimentarius Hungaricus–A szikvíz–Hagyományos Élelmiszerek 1/2003/HKT számú termékleírás ('Codex Alimentarius Hungaricus–Soda water–Traditional Food Product description No. 1/2003/HKT'); Kiss, Imre: *Szódavíz, egy magyar kultuszital. Szikvíz ipartörténeti album* ('Soda water, a cult drink in Hungary: Book of soda-industry history') (Budapest: MOSZI Országos Szikvízkészítő Ipartestület, 2008); Fülöp, Zoltán Ottó: 'A sip of tradition', *Analecta Technica Szegedinensia* 10/1 (2016), 1–5.

3 Salomonsson, Karin: 'The E-economy and the Culinary Heritage', *Ethnologia Europaea* 32/2 (2002), 125–144.

4 Stoličná, Rastislava: 'A táplálkozás mint etnoidentifikációs jegy' ('Food as an Ethno-identification Characteristic') in Liszka, József ed.: *Acta Ethnologica Danubiana* 5–6. *Az Etnológiai Központ Évkönyve*. Ročenka Výskumného centra európskej etnológie. Jahrbuch des Forschungszentrums für Europäische Ethnologie ('Yearbook of the Research Centre for European Ethnology') (Komárom–Dunaszerdahely: Lilium Aurum Könyvkiadó, 2003–2004), 41–52.

5 DeSoucey, Michaela: 'Gastrationalism: Food Traditions and Authenticity Politics in the European Union', *American Sociological Review* 75/3 (2010), 432–455.

have a positive impact on the auto- and heterostereotypes of the country concerned. This is why these culturally-defined foods and drinks, endowed with additional meanings, are considered by the actors as being a depository of the national cultural heritage. DeSoucey points out that the inclusion of the concept of gastronationalism allows these products to undergo thematisation transnationally within national and pan-national frameworks. Consequently, qualified products are also given a prominent role in the contemporary symbolic politics of certain countries: because of their sociological relevance they are assigned an identity-marking function, and they touch upon the problem of authenticity. The fact that the term 'Hungarikum', having entered gastronomic culture, has become synonymous with Hungarian quality foodstuffs, raises a fundamental issue. There is a polemic in terms of whether the products (e.g. soda water and wine spritzer) have the identity-signalling capacity attributed to them.

THE EXHIBITION ON THE INDUSTRIAL HISTORY OF SODA WATER AT THE HYDROGLOBE IN SZEGED

The exhibition on the history of the soda water industry in Szeged (Southern Hungary), which is unique in Europe, plays a special role in the heritagization of food products at local level in Hungary. This is a progressive example of the *new museology* approach,⁶ whereby the soda water artefacts adopt new meanings through *semiotic retooling*⁷: they thus take on symbolic and historical significance. As a medium, the museum⁸ not only collects, preserves and transmits knowledge, but also offers the possibility of constant reinterpretation, foregrounding issues such as polyvocality and institutional communication.⁹ With an understanding of cultural representation as a specific process of meaning-making,¹⁰ we see the valorisation of

6 Vergo, Peter ed.: *New Museology* (London: Reaktion Books, 1989).

7 Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara: *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

8 For more on 'the museum as medium', see Putnam, James: *Art and Artifact: Museum as Medium* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2001).

9 Wilhelm, Gábor: 'Az új muzeológia fogalmai és problémái' ('Concepts and problems of the new museology') *Néprajzi Látóhatár* 22/2 (2013), 8–29.

10 Korff, Gottfried and Roth, Martin eds.: *Das historische Museum. Labor, Schaubühne, Identitätsfabrik* ('The historical museum: Laboratory, stage, identity factory') (Frankfurt am Main/New York/Paris: Campus Verlag – Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1990); Lidchi, Henrietta: 'The Poetics and the Politics of Exhibiting Other Cultures', in Hall, Stuart ed.: *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (Thousand Oaks/London/New Delhi: Sage Publications/Open University, 1997), 151–222; Clifford, James, 'On Ethnographic Allegory', in Clifford, James and

the use of exhibition strategies that go beyond the display of objects, images and documents, and focus on aspects of the collection, the redefinition of contexts of meaning, and alternative uses of space and performativity. These methodological and thematic changes go hand in hand with a rethinking of display spaces and a focus on dissemination.

The question arises: how does the curatorial concept represent protected soda water? What are the qualities of the product to be highlighted in the collection? How are soda water objects integrated into the continental collecting context? In Hungary, the musealisation¹¹ of soda water has taken place in several locations. The preservation and public display of soda water artefacts in Szeged will be realised at the local level in an unusual space. In discussing the relationship between the exhibition environment and the installation, it is appropriate to refer to the architectural features of the water tower, known locally as the *Old Lady*. It is the first reinforced concrete water tower in Hungary still in use today. Following its complete renovation in 2006, the building is set to be declared a monument and the square surrounding the tower will be rebuilt.

The primary role of the hydroglobe will continue to be the provision of water to the city, but its scope of operation will be extended during the 21st century. Its interior will house exhibitions – a permanent exhibition on the history of physics and the history of the soda water industry – and its excellent acoustics will allow it to host concerts, as well as serving as a viewing platform. This versatility makes it a building with added value that bears the signs of the interaction of time and the changes that have taken place through it. It embodies a chronology in which the present stretches back into the past and extends into the future. In the spirit of cultural recycling, the hydroglobe is embedded in Szeged's bloodstream as a 'highlighted tourist attraction.'

The water tower not only provides a particular environment for the soda water objects, but also a new interpretative framework. The objects exhibited in this collection space have lost their function as tools, and have been given a distinctive role through their museological treatment. Their temporal dimension is thus twofold: on the one hand, they have a historical time derived from their use, and on

George, Marcus E. eds.: *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1986), 98–121.

11 Fülöp, Zoltán Ottó: *A borvíztől a hungarikumig* ('From acidulous mineral water to Hungarikum') (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2021).

the other, they have new meanings beyond their materiality in the definition of museum time.

SODA WATER ARTIFACTS IN RELATION TO HISTORICAL AND MUSEUM TIME

The primary aim in housing objects typical of the soda-water-making profession in a water tower was to preserve the special tools of the soda-water makers' trade, and to make them public. The collection is entitled: *Soda Water, a Cult Drink in Hungary*, and consists of nearly 150 artefacts, which, once removed from their original medium, only preserve fragmentary information about their former users, and the uses to which these artefacts were put. At the same time, the exhibition space traces the history of the soda water manufacturing industry in Hungary, starting with the name Ányos Jedlik, a Benedictine priest, and ending with the year in which soda water was included in the *Codex Alimentarius Hungaricus*. The certifications granted to soda water in the last two decades – e.g. the Traditions–Tastes–Regions trademark, *Euroterroirs Programme* (Countries of Europe Programme), its declaration as a Hungarikum and its inclusion in the county's heritage register (Bánffi soda) – are not represented in the exhibition.

The exhibition tells the story of soda water over nearly two centuries. The reconstruction of the past is essentially chronological. This ordering principle, which is common in museum practice, makes it easy to follow the sequence of events. However, the linear narrative is broken at one point and the historical thread is linked to subjective time. The curator has taken advantage of the circular building to create a spatial representation of personal memories. The industrial history line is thus enriched by the recollections of the famous Ferencváros (Budapest) soda water dynasty, of which an episode from the history of the Deák family recounts winter soda-water transport in the 1970s.

Since chronology and classification by external features provide information on the *cultural biography of things*¹² – their age, origin, and their role in social space – the soda water bottles in the display cases in the water-tower exhibition, reflect a shift in the production process from the aesthetic to the functional. This can be explained by the fact that the technical processes and materials used have become cheaper and more modern from one era to the next, adapting to changing consumer needs. The

12 Kopytoff, Igor: 'The cultural biography of things', in Appadurai, Arjun ed.: *The social life of things: Commodities in cultural perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 64–91.

grouping of the documents shows that the innovations that led to the mass production of soda water progressed in parallel in a number of countries. Here you will find, in chronological order, a technical diagram of John Mervin Nooth's apparatus, a graphic engraving of the Schweppes Geneva Apparatus, a technological drawing by Ányos Jedlik and a black-and-white photograph of an Austro-Hungarian Empire-era soda water factory.

Once part of everyday life under the banners 'Blue Era', 'Red Parade' and 'Pure Green', the soda water bottles arranged by colour and size have become dysfunctional objects within the walls of the water tower. The exhibition is thus an example of how everyday food-culture objects can become museum artefacts. In the hydroglobe, 'authenticity' is a fundamental criterion for objects that have been taken out of use, since they represent, with the exception of the fine art reproductions, artefacts that are authentic bearers of a specific past. The *biography of things* can be traced in their everyday use, in the technological advances and in the meanings attached to them. This is illustrated by the hand- and motor-driven soda water machines that are lined up side by side and that demonstrate various levels of technological development. One of the eye-catching pieces in the collection is the large, wooden, wheeled soda water filling machine.

The various apparati, double-globed *gazogenes*, *kracherlis* and soda water bottles with coloured labels and/or motifs sold by pharmacies in Hungary have been placed in a glass display case, labelled 'Pharmacy Pearls'. A product by László Gömbös, a pharmacist in Szentes (Southern Hungary), advertised with a male figure dressed in a decorative Hungarian costume, shows that the objects were used to convey messages, including national identity. The notion of temporality takes on a new meaning when the object acts as a symbolic carrier of a historical event, and which thus, in the Kublerian sense,¹³ evokes different meanings as historical data. This is exemplified by the red, white and green wreath-emblazoned 'No, No, Never!' and the 'Everything Back!' bottles depicting historical Hungary, which were in circulation between the two world wars and reflected a rejection of the peace treaty that ended World War I for Hungary. The handshake motif on the soda bottle head of the Tavernkeepers Soda Water Factory in Szeged, also condenses metaphorical meaning. The image on the orange and white porcelain inlay can be interpreted as a symbol of cooperation and collaboration.

13 Kubler, George Alexander: *The shape of time: Remarks on the history of things* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962).



Fig. 1. Transport of soda water on a sled in Budapest¹⁴



Figs. 2–4. Coloured soda water bottles in thematic order

In the museum space, archival footage shows soda delivery by ox cart, horse-drawn carriage, Pannonia, IZS, Ural and BMW sidecar motorcycles, VW Kübelwagen,¹⁵ and then Barkas and Robur vans. The exhibition space also features advertisements, references to the history of art and literature, yellowed photographs, prints and posters, which are not only illustrative tools, but also a source of information on lifestyles and consumption habits, such as the Mabel Lucie Attwell cartoon, which conveys a sense of American bourgeois affluence. Placed near Marcello Nizzoli's¹⁶ *Campari l'aperitivo* neo-cubist poster, the bottles, which are simple in form but unique in their place of invention, are evidence of the spread of soda water in Europe, North and South America, and Australia.

The soda water collection at the hydroglobe reflects Arjun Appadurai's¹⁷ idea, that the meaning of objects is embedded in their form, their use, and their historical trajectory. The techniques and installation solutions used in the staging of the pieces presented, emphasise this message. Although the facility is not open to the public and has no catalogue, visitor centre, museum shop or guided tours, the exhibition fulfils its traditional function of 're-creating reality by collecting material in a way that is faithful to the original'.¹⁸ It is clear from the concept that 'value recovery is always interest-driven'.¹⁹ According to this concept, the logic of the collection is strongly influenced by the institution and by the curators' self-interpretation and self-representation. The curators see soda water in terms of its importance in the history of the soda-water industry as a whole, but also highlight the positive qualities of the product: the guaranteed, predictable quality, the historical references, the activities of local soda-water maker István Bánffi and his family, and the making

14 All the images in the study are the author's own.

15 The Volkswagen *Kübelwagen* is a light, open-top military personnel carrier, most often a command vehicle, used in World War II. Mayer-Stein, Hans-Georg, *Volkswagen Militärfahrzeuge, 1938–1948. KdF-Wagen, Kübelwagen und Schwimmwagen im Einsatz* ('Volkswagen Military Vehicles, 1938–1948: KdF-Wagen, Kübelwagen and Schwimmwagen in Action') (Erlangen: Karl Müller Verlag, 1993). The vehicle was adapted to carry a few crates of soda water.

16 Marcello Nizzoli (1887–1969) was an Italian poster designer and industrial designer. He was commissioned by the Campari Company to produce a large stone print in 1926. The work was influenced by Fernand Léger's *Le Siphon*. Cantoni, Ivan, *Marcello Nizzoli: inediti dalla sua terra d'origine* ('Marcello Nizzoli: unpublished works from his homeland') (Parma: Battei, 2009).

17 Appadurai, Arjun: 'Commodities and politics of value', in Pearce, Susan M. ed.: *Interpreting Objects and Collections* (London/New York: Routledge, 1994), 76–91.

18 Binni, Lanfranco and Pinna, Giovanni: *A múzeum. Egy kulturális gépezet története és működése a XVI. századtól napjainkig* ('The Museum: The history and operation of a cultural machine from the 16th century to the present day') (Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó, 1986), 120.

19 Ébli, Gábor: *Az antropológizált múzeum. Közgyűjtemények átalakulása az ezredfordulón* ('The anthropological museum: Transformation of public collections at the turn of the Millennium') (Budapest: Typotex, 2005).



Fig. 5. The handshake motif of the Tavernkeepers Soda Water Factory in Szeged

public of his own collection. Igor Kopytoff's idea that, while the economy is characterised by commodification, culture is marked by decommodification²⁰ can be applied to the case of the Szeged enterprise. István Bánffi does not wish to market his valuable collection, but to enrich it. His private collection embodies a personal singularisation, as he explores everyday artefacts and makes them public, such that, precisely because he considers them worth preserving, they undergo a shift, to quote Kopytoff, 'from the uniquely valuable to the uniquely worthless.'²¹ The Municipality of Szeged is lending the industrial heritage a new function within the framework of an urban rehabilitation project, treating the facility as a building of urban significance. The local government is also placing soda water in a wider context, joining the series of Cultural Heritage Days²² with a European perspective, as well as the World Water Day, and the Szeged Open Air Festival performances. In this sense, the water tower itself has a museum character, and vice versa, one of the most important exhibition contexts for this character is the industrial monument itself, which preserves a slice of the city's past. The *museum boom*²³ since the late 20th century, has favoured the cultural valorisation of previously-neglected industrial sites. There are examples of this on the international scene, which can be compared to the water tower in Szeged in many ways.²⁴

INTERPRETATION OF OBJECTS IN AN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Since the late 20th century, there has been an observable trend in museology that has increasingly sought to reinterpret gastronomic goods and to bring them within the walls of the museum, a process that has also involved exhibitions that show the material culture of the craft. The soda water items in these museum collections²⁵

20 Kopytoff: 'The cultural biography of things', 64.

21 Kopytoff: 'The cultural biography of things', 75.

22 <http://www.museum.hu/program/44179/Kulturalis_Orokseg_Napok_2015_Szent_Istvan_teri_viztorony_Szeged> accessed 7 August 2024.

23 Ébli, Gábor: *Múzeumánia. Egy kulturális élménygyár európai modelljei* ('Museummania: European models of a cultural experience factory') (Budapest: L'Harmattan Kiadó, 2016).

24 For more on this topic, see Fülöp: *A borvítzól a hungarikumig*, 2021.

25 This is exemplified by the soda water collections in the museums studied within the framework of the research: Technisches Museum Wien ('Vienna Museum of Science and Technology'), Österreichisches Gesellschafts- und Wirtschaftsmuseum ('Austrian Museum for Social and Economic Affairs, Vienna'), Museum of London, Science Museum, London, The British Museum, London, Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas ('National Museum of Decorative Arts, Madrid'), Museo de Historia de Madrid ('History Museum of Madrid'), Musée Mohammed VI pour la Civilisation de l'Eau au Maroc – AMAN ('Mohammed VI Museum for the Civilisation of Water in Morocco – AMAN, Marrakesh').

demonstrate a variety of curatorial approaches. In the following, I focus on a comparative analysis of the permanent exhibitions in three private European collections: the *World of Kitchen Museum* in Hanover (*WoK Museum*), the *Museo de Artes y Costumbres Populares* in Málaga (*Unicaja Museum*), and *The Sherlock Holmes Museum* in London. An analysis of each exhibition site is also necessary, because the building in which the objects are housed can be interpreted, not only as a facility created for a specific purpose, but also as a kind of *communication*, which can likewise convey a message with its external signs.²⁶ As *reflexive memory institutions*,²⁷ soda water material goods serve to present the artefacts through the lens of utilisation, but embedded in a different context. The modes of exhibition share a sense of meaningfulness, multi-layered temporality and fragmentation.

The interrelationships between the objects on exhibit, the exhibition space and the collection strategy, show that the objects were embedded in a different context and with different meanings in each location: as a transnational gastronomic product in Lower Saxony, as an integral part of wine culture in Andalusia, and as a reference to literary history in the British capital. The curators of the WoK Museum used the collected source material to present the world's most significant cuisines and the gastronomic culture of different eras and from different geographical locations, from a genus-specific, cultural-historical perspective. The institution's time management and exhibition arrangement were characterised by a holistic approach and interactivity. The curators of the display saw gastronomic goods as a special field of research that mediated between different disciplines. In the former printing press building, they presented changes in eating habits from antiquity to the present day in a kind of historical time axis, focusing on consumption as a communal activity. For this reason, eating habits revealed a great deal, not only about food and drink itself, but also about human relationships. Thus, the role and meaning of the laid table could mostly be understood without textual references. In the Hanover concept, the classification of soda water was based on a transnational classification.

26 Böhme, Gernot: *Architektur und Atmosphäre* ('Architecture and Atmosphere') (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2006), 11.

27 The concept of a 'reflexive museum' refers to an institution that does not merely exhibit, but creates the opportunity for continuous reinterpretation. For more on this topic, see Butler, Shelley Ruth: *Contested Representations: Revisiting 'Into the Heart of Africa'* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 15–25; Schorch, Philipp: 'The reflexive museum – opening the door to behind the scenes', *Te Ara – Journal of Museums Aotearoa* 33/1–2 (2009), 28–31; Wilhelm: 'Az új muzeológia fogalmai és problémái', 9–14; Butler, Shelley Ruth: 'Reflexive Museology: Lost and Found', in Macdonald, Sharon and Rees Leahy, Helen eds.: *The International Handbooks of Museum Studies* (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2015), 159–182; Brulon Soares, Bruno: 'The Museum Performance: Reflecting on a Reflexive Museology', *Complutum* 26/2 (2015), 49–57.

In support of this, the curators selected two geographical areas – North America and Eastern Europe – where there is still significant consumption of soda water and where everyday use suggests a close association with the product. The *Unicaja Museum* in Málaga is a tavern located in a 17th century inn. The building has given the objects a historical context in which local and regional knowledge coexist. The selection and arrangement strategies of the exhibits on display demonstrate a complex approach, including objects typical of everyday life as well as exclusive consumer items used by the social elite. The London exhibition is located on the legendary Baker Street, where the Arthur Conan Doyle stories were originally set. Under monument protection, the listed former block of flats was a boarding house between 1860 and 1936. Inside, objects reflect the socio-cultural characteristics of Victorian England. The period soda water apparatus with their multi-layered meaning fit into this interior. The British perception is indirectly related to the social reception of soda water in Hungary, the difference being that, while the product had already been legitimised in England as an article of pleasure, it was still in its infancy in Hungary at this time.

CONCLUSION

The collection and museum-like use of soda water objects demonstrate several levels of the interpretation of material goods in parallel, which create different ways of displaying soda water without the institutions reflecting on each other. The study of the cultural shapes of soda water, and the changes to its status, is part of an international practice that takes a historical perspective to explore the multiple layers of attitudes, behaviours and cultural signs associated with food. Tracing the historical evolution of symbolic meanings through the example of soda water has shown, that gastronomic goods, as products, have different meanings among social actors in different cultures and in different contexts. The construction of the heritage of gastronomic goods is an updated extension of heritage-making (*la fabrique du patrimoine*)²⁸ to agri-food products.

28 Heinrich, Nathalie: *La fabrique du patrimoine. De la cathédrale à la petite cuillère* ('The making of heritage: From the cathedral to the small spoon') (Paris: Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 2009).



Fig. 6. Soda water apparati from Victorian England at the Sherlock Holmes Museum

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Protassova, Ekaterina Ph.D. holds a Ph.D. in Philology and Hab. in Pedagogy. She is an Associate Professor at the University of Helsinki. She has authored and co-authored over 400 monographs, articles and book chapters, headed and participated in various international and national projects investigating Russophone migration, language pedagogies, child and adult bilingualism, and the role of language and culture in immigrant integration. (ekaterina.protassova@helsinki.fi)

Rauber, Fae R. is a student at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. She is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Arts degree in interdisciplinary studies with focuses in anthropology, psychology, and religious studies.

Sexton, Regina is a food and culinary historian and lecturer at University College Cork. She is the programme manager of UCC's M.A. and Postgraduate Diploma in Food Studies and Irish Foodways. (r.sexton@ucc.ie)

Shultz, Sarah Ph.D. the Herbert Halpert Postdoctoral Fellow in the Memorial University Folklore and Language Archives, holds a Ph.D. in Folklore from Memorial University of Newfoundland. She has recently published 'Rhetorical Uses of Spice on East London Indian Food Tours' in *Ethnologies*, Journal of the Folklore Studies Association of Canada, and is editing a special issue of *Voices: The Journal of New York Folklore*, on the theme of 'Food, Identity, and Home'. (Sarahshultz88@gmail.com)

Szarvas, Zsuzsa Ph.D. is Chief Curator, Museum of Ethnography, Budapest. She started her career in the Museum of Ethnography, then between 1987 and 2006 she worked at the Research Institute of Ethnography of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. She was appointed to the Museum of Ethnography as Head of the Collections Department in 2006. From 2010 to 2020 she was deputy director general, and from 2020 Chief Curator. Her research interests include the study of household assets and lifestyle changes, Finnish-Hungarian comparative research on material culture, and Jewish identity studies. Large-scale exhibitions such as the 2009 exhibition, 'How we see the Finns', or the 2014 exhibition, 'Fragments of the Culture of Hungarian Rural Jewry', reflect her main research interest. She was the Chief

Curator of the new permanent exhibition of the Museum of Ethnography Budapest. (szarvas@neprajz.hu)

Szilágyi, Levente Ph.D. is a research fellow in the Institute of Ethnology, Research Centre for the Humanities, HUN-REN (ELTE RCH from August 2025). His main fields of research interest are border studies and the examination of cross-border relations. He received his Ph.D. in 2014 on the basis of a thesis devoted to the the history of relations between settlements located on both sides of the Hungarian–Romanian border. His current research focuses on the transformation of agriculture in Romania following the 1989 change of regime, with particular attention paid to cooperative farming models. (szilagyi.levente@abtk.hu)

Szilágyi, Zsolt Ph.D. has been a senior research fellow at the Institute of Ethnology, HUN-REN (ELTE RCH from August 2025) Research Centre for the Humanities, since 2007. He earned his Ph.D. in Mongolian Studies in 2004 and in Historical Science in 2011, from Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest. He has authored two monographs and several scientific articles and papers on the social and cultural history of the Mongols, Mongolian ethnology, and related topics. Additionally, he is a member of the editorial board of several scientific journals related to Mongolian studies, history, and ethnology, and he serves as the executive editor for the Hungarian-Chinese journal entitled *Studies on Cultures along the Silk Road*. (szilagyi.zsolt@abtk.hu)

Yelenevskaya, Maria Dr. is affiliated with the Department of Humanities and Arts at the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology. Her research is devoted to the use of language in multilingual and multicultural settings, cultural aspects of immigration, computer-mediated communication, the linguistic landscape of multicultural cities and sociolinguistic aspects of humor. She has authored and co-authored over 100 publications including research papers, monographs and course books. (ymaria@technion.ac.il)

Vaneker, Karin started researching edible aroids (taro) in 2003. This venture resulted in presented papers, publications, and contributions to several publications and reference works, including *Reimagining Marginalized Foods: Global Processes, Local Places* (University of Arizona Press, 2012); *Oxford Encyclopedia of Food and Drink in America* (Oxford University Press, 2012); *Food: An Atlas* (Berkeley: Guerrilla Cartography, 2013); *Encyclopedia of Food and Agricultural Ethics* (New

York: Springer, 2014) and *Ethnic American Food Today: A Cultural Encyclopedia* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015). (vanekerksm@gmail.com)

Vass, Erika Ph.D. worked as a curator in the Hungarian Open Air Museum between 2004 and 2023. Her primary task was the creation of the rural part of the Transylvanian Building Complex, which opened in 2022. As part of this, she carried out fieldwork in Transylvania several times. She obtained a Ph.D. degree in 2007 for her thesis entitled 'The Saint's Day and the Pilgrimage as Ritual Drama'. Since January 2024, she has been working in the Museum of Ethnography, Budapest. Her fields of research include folk religion, ethnic and denominational identity, inter-ethnic relations and assimilation. (vasserika@gmail.com)



IX. INTERNATIONAL
COMMISSION FOR
ETHNOLOGICAL FOOD
RESEARCH



MAJA GODINA GOLIJJA

THREE SUCCESSFUL AND FRUITFUL DECADES OF WORK

PROFESSOR PATRICIA LYSAGHT AS PRESIDENT OF THE SIEF FOOD RESEARCH WORKING GROUP

It is a great pleasure to welcome you this evening to the impressive Museum of Ethnography, Budapest and to shed light on the long-term work of Professor Patricia Lysaght and her Presidency of the International Commission for Ethnological Food Research, later renamed the SIEF Food Research Working Group.¹

The International Commission for Ethnological Food Research was created on the initiative of ethnologists and food researchers as a group of researchers independent of SIEF in 1970 in Lund, Sweden. Its first president was Professor Nils-Arvid Bringéus, a Professor of European Ethnology at the University of Lund. Among the founding members, we must also mention some other long-term members of this group: Professor Günter Wiegmann, Professor Alexander Fenton, Professor Eszter Kisbán, Professor Konrad Köstlin, Professor Grith Lerche, and Professor Johanna Maria van Winter.² We are happy that some of the founding members of this Commission still participate in our scientific meetings and enrich our work with their contributions. Among them, I should mention Professor Eszter Kisbán, who is with us tonight, and Professor Konrad Köstlin, who unfortunately could not travel to Budapest this year.

1 The text was prepared for the ceremony at the SIEF 24th International Ethnological Food Research Conference: *Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage*, in the Museum of Ethnography, Budapest, 18 September 2024.

2 Bringéus, Nils-Arvid, 'Ethnological Food Conferences 1970–1998: Ideas and Routes for European Collaboration', in Lysaght, Patricia ed.: *Food from Nature: Attitudes, Strategies and Culinary Practices*, Uppsala 2000, 19–29.

Professor Lysaght became involved in the work of this group from a very early stage. In 1983, she first attended the International Commission for Ethnological Food Research conference, held in Mátrafüred, Hungary, and organized by Professor Eszter Kisbán. Professor Lysaght's active work in this group continued even after this scientific conference; in 1992, she organised the 9th International Conference on Ethnological Food Research in Ireland, entitled 'Milk and Milk Products'. She also edited its proceedings, titled 'Milk and Milk Products from Medieval to Modern Times', published in 1994.³ Three decades ago, based on her successful work in the Commission, she was elected President of the International Commission for Ethnological Food Research. When she took on this task, a long, stable, and fruitful period started for this group. Professor Lysaght successfully managed the Commission for a long time with her great enthusiasm for work, good organisation, discipline, and knowledge. It is likely, if I may joke a little, that her success was also due to Irish perseverance, which is always necessary for such work.

Under her leadership, conferences were organised that aimed at the scientific treatment of established ethnological topics, as well as some new and until then poorly researched ones. To name just a few: 'Food from Nature: Attitudes, Strategies, and Culinary Practices' in 1998, in Sweden;⁴ 'Food and Celebration' in 2000, in Slovenia;⁵ 'Changing Tastes: Food Culture and the Process of Industrialization' in 2002' in Switzerland;⁶ 'Time for Food: Everyday Food and Changing Meal Habits' in 2010, in Finland; 'Places of Food Production: Origin, Identity, Imagination' in 2016, in Germany; and 'Tradition and Nutritional Science in the Modern Food Chain' in 2018, in Greece.

3 Lysaght, Patricia, ed.: *Milk and Milk Products from Medieval to Modern Times* (Edinburgh: Canongate Academic in association with the Department of Irish Folklore, University College Dublin and the European Ethnological Research Centre, 1994).

4 Lysaght, Patricia, ed.: *Food from Nature: Attitudes, Strategies and Culinary Practices: Proceedings of the 12th Conference of the International Commission for Ethnological Food Research, Umeå and Frostviken, Sweden, 8–14 June, 1998* (Uppsala: The Royal Gustavus Adolphus Academy for Swedish Folk Culture, 2000).

5 Lysaght, Patricia, ed.: *Food and Celebration. From Fasting to Feasting. Proceedings of the 13th Conference of the International Commission for Ethnological Food Research, Ljubljana, Preddvor, and Piran, Slovenia, June 5–11, 2000* (Ljubljana: Založba ZRC; Dublin: Department of Irish Folklore, University College Dublin, 2002).

6 Lysaght, Patricia and Burckhardt-Seebass, Christine eds.: *Changing Tastes: Food Culture and the Processes of Industrialization. Proceedings of the 14th Conference of the International Commission for Ethnological Food Research, Basel and Vevey, Switzerland, 30 September–6 October 2002* (Basel: Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Volkskunde; Dublin: Department of Irish Folklore, University College, 2004).

During the decades when Professor Lysaght led the Commission, the conferences were carefully planned with local scholars, well organised, and open to researchers of different theoretical orientations, disciplines, interests, and ages. At these events, experienced and established nutrition researchers from Europe, Asia, North and South America, and the Arab world, met with younger colleagues, including doctoral students. It was a great experience that enriched and inspired all of us for further work. It also provided carefully selected keynote speakers and professional excursions that showcased various food-related practices in the field.

Cooperating with Professor Lysaght in organising conferences also brought out her personality's warm, human side. Despite the abundance of work and concern for the organisation of conferences, she always had time to address the personal problems of the participants – caring for the well-being and logistics of the older members of the group, helping the sick, and working to provide financial assistance for those for whom participation in the conferences represented a significant financial burden. It is essential to mention her help to researchers from Eastern Europe who faced financial problems and other restrictions on travel and participation in conferences.

The editorial work of Professor Lysaght is extremely important. She took great care to ensure that the scientific contributions were printed in independent publications after the conferences, which was not common practice before her leadership of this group. In editing and proofreading the texts, Professor Lysaght invested hours of work so that the texts would be accepted for printing by reputable publishing houses. I want to thank her for this important and often overlooked work.

It is hard to imagine how Professor Lysaght managed to accomplish so much for the food research group while also teaching at University College Dublin, delivering guest lectures at foreign universities, serving as President of The Folklore Society in London, editing important folklore journals such as *Folklore* (London) and *Béalóideas* (Dublin), and serving as an elected member of the Royal Gustavus Adolphus Academy for Swedish Folk Culture, Uppsala, and the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin. However, Professor Lysaght performed all of these tasks very successfully and without complaint.

For her excellent work and leadership of the International Ethnological Food Research Group, I sincerely thank her on behalf of the members of this group – and past and present conference participants. Her efforts have created excellent

conditions for the future work of this food research group and have forged many scientific and friendly ties between food researchers and institutions.

Dear Patricia, thank you again for your exceptional work, and I wish you all the best in the future!

INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR ETHNOLOGICAL FOOD RESEARCH: CONFERENCES, THEMES AND PUBLICATIONS (1970–2025)

Year	Place	Theme / Publication
1970	Lund, Sweden	Theme: 'Ethnological Food Research Development, Methods and Future Tasks'. Publication: <i>Ethnological Food Research in Europe and USA</i> . Editors: Nils-Arvid Bringéus & Günter Wiegelmann. Publisher: Otto Schwartz & Co., Göttingen 1971, 213pp. Also in: <i>Ethnologia Scandinavica</i> 1971, 1–187 and <i>Ethnologia Europaea</i> 5 (1971), 1–213.
1973	Helsinki, Finland	Theme: 'Dominant Traits in Regional. Food Systems in the Twentieth Century'. Publication: <i>Ethnologische Nahrungsfor-schung. Ethnological Food Research</i> . Editors: Niilo Valonen & Juhani U.E. Lehtonen. Publisher: Sonderdruck aus/Offprint from: <i>Kansatieteellinen Arkisto</i> 26. Suomen Mui-naismuistoyhdistys, Helsinki 1975, 340pp.
1977	Cardiff, Wales	Theme: 'National Food'. Publication: <i>Food in Perspective</i> . Editors: Alexander Fenton & Trefor M. Owen. Publisher: John Donald Publishers Ltd., Edinburgh 1981, 425pp.
1980	Stainz, Austria	Theme: 'Nahrung als Kommunikation'. Publication: Proceedings Unpublished. Review in: <i>Österreichische Zeitschrift für Volkskunde</i> 1980, 252–263.
1983	Mátrafüred, Hungary	Theme: 'Sequences and Periods of Change in the History of Popular Diet'. Publication: <i>Food in Change. Eating Habits from the Middle Ages to the Present Day</i> . Editors: Alexander Fenton & Eszter Kisbán. Publisher: John Donald Publishers Ltd., Edinburgh 1986, 166pp.
1985	Karniowice, Poland	Theme: 'Innovations in Food Habits'. Publication: Proceedings unpublished. Review in: <i>Ethnologia Scandinavica</i> 1986, 161–163.

Year	Place	Theme / Publication
1987	Søgndal, Norway	Theme: 'Food Preservation and Conservation'. Publication: <i>Food Conservation. Ethnological Studies</i> . Editors: Astri Riddervold & Andreas Ropeid. Publisher: Prospect Books, London 1988, 224pp.
1989	Philadelphia, USA	Theme: 'Food as Symbol'. Publication: Proceedings Unpublished.
1992	Dublin & Kilfinane, Co. Limerick & The Burren, Co. Clare, Ireland	Theme: 'Milk and Milk Products'. Publication: <i>Milk and Milk Products. From Medieval to Modern Times</i> . Editor: Patricia Lysaght. Publisher: Canongate Academic, Edinburgh 1994, 229pp.
1994	Freising, Germany	Theme: 'The Potato' / 'Die Kartoffel'. Publication: <i>Kulturprägung durch Nahrung: Die Kartoffel</i> . Editors: Sigrid Weggeman & Gertrud Benker. Publisher: Edition infotainment Verlags GmbH., München 1997, 94pp (Part publication of the Conference Proceedings).
1996	Nicosia, Cyprus	Theme: 'Food and the Traveller. The Impact of Migration, Immigration and Tourism on Ethnic Traditional Food'. Publication: <i>Food and the Traveller. Migration, Immigration, Tourism and Ethnic Food</i> . Editor: Patricia Lysaght. Publisher: Intercollege Press, in association with the Department of Irish Folklore, University College Dublin, Nicosia 1998, 342pp.
1998	Umeå & Frostviken, Sweden	Theme: 'Making the Most of Nature'. Publication: <i>Food from Nature. Attitudes</i> , Editor: Patricia Lysaght. Publisher: The Royal Gustavus Adolphus Academy for Swedish Folk Culture, Uppsala, Sweden (Acta Academiae Regiae Gustavi Adolphi 71), 2000, 400pp.
2000	Ljubljana, Preddvor & Piran, Slovenia	Theme: 'Food and Celebration: From Fasting to Feasting'. Publication: <i>Food and Celebration: From Fasting to Feasting</i> . Editor: Patricia Lysaght. Publisher: Založba. ZRC/ZRC Publishing, ZRC SAZU, in association with the Department of Irish Folklore, University College Dublin, Ljubljana 2002, 428pp.

Year	Place	Theme / Publication
2002	Basel and Vevey, Switzerland	Theme: 'Changing Tastes. Food Culture and the Process of Industrialization.' Publication: <i>Changing Tastes. Food Culture and the Processes of Industrialization.</i> Editor: Patricia Lysaght (with Christine Burckhardt-Seebass). Publisher: Verlag der Schweizerischen Gesellschaft für Volkskunde, Basel, in association with the Department of Irish Folklore, University College Dublin, Basel 2004, 332pp.
2004	Dubrovnik, Croatia	Theme: 'Mediterranean Food and Its Influences Abroad.' Publication: <i>Mediterranean Food: Concepts and Trends.</i> Editor: Patricia Lysaght with Nives Ritig-Beljak Publisher: Biblioteka Nova Ethnografia, Zagreb 2006, 350pp.
2006	Innsbruck, Austria & Merano, Italy	Theme: 'Sanitas per Aquas. Foodways and Lifestyles in the Search for Health and Beauty.' Publication: <i>Sanitas per Aquas. Spas, Lifestyles and Foodways.</i> Editor: Patricia Lysaght. Publisher: Studien Verlag, Innsbruck, Austria 2008, 379pp.
2008	Oslo, Norway	Theme: 'Cultural Crossroads. Food and Meals at Cultural Crossroads.' Publication: <i>Cultural Crossroads. Food and Meals at Cultural Crossroads.</i> Editor: Patricia Lysaght (with Ann Helene Bolstad Skjelbred). Publisher: Novus Press, Oslo 2010, 341pp.
2010	Åbo/Turku, Finland	Theme: 'Time for Food.' Publication: <i>Time for Food. Everyday Food and Changing Meal Habits.</i> Editor: Patricia Lysaght. Publisher: Åbo Akademi University Press 2012, 366pp.
2012	Lund, Sweden	Theme: 'The Return of Traditional Food.' Publication: <i>The Return of Traditional Food.</i> Publisher: Lund Studies in Arts and Cultural Sciences, Lund 2013, 311pp.

Year	Place	Theme / Publication
2014	Łódź, Poland	Theme: 'Food and the Internet.' Publication: <i>Food and the Internet</i> . Editors: Violetta Krawczyk-Wasilewska and Patricia Lysaght Publisher: Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main 2015, 275pp.
2016	Heidelberg, Germany	Theme: 'Places of Food Production. Origin, Identity, Imagination.' Publication: <i>Places of Food Production. Origin, Identity, Imagination</i> . Editors: Silke Bartsch and Patricia Lysaght Publisher: Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main 2017, 292pp.
2018	Kalamata, Greece	Theme: 'Tradition and Nutritional Science in the Modern Food Chain.' Publication: <i>Tradition and Nutritional Science in the Modern Food Chain</i> . Editors: Patricia Lysaght and Antonia-Leda Matalas. Publisher: American Farm School, Thessaloniki, Greece 2019, 276pp.
2022	Antwerp, Belgium	Theme: 'Food, People and the City.' Publication: Part publication (2023–2025) in: <i>Food, Culture & Society and Food & History</i> .
2024	Budapest, Hungary	Theme: 'Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage.' Publication: <i>Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage</i> . Editors: Anikó Báti and Patricia Lysaght. Publishers: Museum of Ethnography and the Institute of Ethnology HUN-REN RCH, Budapest, Hungary 2025, 540 pp. Compiled by Patricia Lysaght

Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage offers an international and interdisciplinary overview of contemporary ethnological research on food culture and food heritage. Edited by Anikó Báti and Patricia Lysaght, the volume is based on papers presented at the 24th SIEF International Ethnological Food Research Conference held in Budapest in 2024.

The contributions examine everyday eating practices, revitalised foodways, and processes of heritagisation as socially embedded phenomena through which identities, values, and forms of collective belonging are articulated and negotiated. Particular attention is paid to the implications of globalisation, festivalisation, sustainability, and institutional frameworks influencing current approaches to food-related traditions and practices.

The SIEF Food Working Group's long-standing international and continuously-evolving character is reflected in this volume, which features contributions from 33 authors from 14 countries. It engages with young scholars as well as with researchers with an established reputation. Addressing both academic and professional audiences, this book is a significant reference work in the fields of ethnology and food studies, emphasising the importance of food as a social practice that shapes identities, social relations and future perspectives.



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